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Robert Sommerville.

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Traill

THE

WORKS

OF THE LATE REVEREND

ROBERT TRAILL, A. M.

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL IN LONDON.

[*RECOMMENDED BY THE LATE REV. JAMES HERVEY.*]

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

CUI VERITAS COMPERTA, SINE DEO? CUI DEUS COGNITUS, SINE CHRISTO? CUI CHRISTUS EXPLORATUS, SINE SPIRITU SANCTO? TERTULLIAN.

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A LETTER from the late Mr JAMES HERVEY,

Author of the Meditations, Theron and Aspasio, &c.

To a RELATION of Mr TRAILL's,

Who was Editor of an early Edition of his Works.

SIR,

I RECEIVED your very valuable and no loss acceptable present, some weeks ago. I should have acknowledged the favour sooner; but I chose to stay till I had tasted the dish you set before me. And indeed I find it to be savoury meat, the true manna; food for the soul.

Your worthy relative was a workman that need not be ashamed. He knew how, clearly to state, and solidly to establish the faith of God's elect, and the doctrine according to godliness. —— O! that my heart, and the heart of every reader, may be opened, by the eternal Spirit, to receive the precious truths!

The letter at the end of the first volume, is a judicious performance. It rightly divides the word of truth, and lays the line, with a masterly hand, between the presumptuous Legalist, and the licentious Antinomian. —— I am particularly pleased with the honourable testimony bore to those two excellent books, Dr Owen's Treatise on Justification, and Mr Marshall's Gospel-mystery of Sanctification: books fit to be recommended by so good a judge!

If the Lord pleases to give Theron and Aspasio any acceptance in Scotland, I shall be sincerely glad; but if he vouchsafes to make them, not only welcome, but useful visitants, I shall exceedingly rejoice. —— In case you should think them calculated to promote the honour and further the gospel of JESUS CHRIST, I hope you will favour them with your recommendation, and accompany them with your prayers; which will be a fresh instance of kindness to,

SIR,

Your obliged friend,

and obedient Servant,

JAMES HERVEY.

WESTON,
July 8. 1755.

RECOMMENDATION

TO THE

SERMONS ON STEDFAST ADHERENCE,

Which were Published after the Author's Death.

THE subjects treated upon in these sermons, have been always esteemed, by well-grounded Christians, to have the greatest influence both upon our duty and comfort.

The promises of God *are the matter of our* faith, *and ground of our* hope. Faith *in these precious promises, is that grace which* conveys *to us our interest in them, and* draws forth *the strength and sweetness of them.*

An honest open profession of that faith, *not only in words, or instituted solemnities of public worship, but in all holy conversation and godliness, is* the distinguishing mark *of the churches of Christ in the world.*

And a steady adherence *to that profession, in times of temptation and great backsliding, is the believer's* unquestionable duty, interest, *and* honour.

These great points, of spiritual and practical religion, you have here opened and urged, with that plainness, gravity, and good judgment, by which the late Reverend Mr TRAILL *has been well known in his former evangelical discourses. If any thing here shall seem less correct, it will easily be imputed to the usual disadvantages of posthumous productions.*

But surely great candour and tenderness will be thought due to such orphans, as are turned out into the world, destitute of those improvements which they might have received from the care and cultivation of their worthy parents, if they had not been by death deprived of them.

In compliance with some of the author's particular friends, who were desirous to have these sermons made public, we would recommend them to the perusal of all such as are desirous to live more by faith upon the promises of God, and to be just and true to their holy profession. That the God of all grace would make them effectual to these good purposes, is the earnest prayer of

Their servants for Jesus' sake

WILL. TONGUE.
JOHN NISBET.
MATT. CLARK.

AN ACCOUNT

OF THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

THE AUTHOR.

THE Rev. Mr ROBERT TRAILL was descended of an ancient family, that had been in possession of the estate of Bi-bo, in Fife, from the time of Walter Traill, archbishop of St Andrews, 1385, who purchased it, and gave it to his nephew. Robert Traill, son of James Traill, and father of our author, was minister first of Ely, in the east of Fife, afterwards of the Gray-friars church in Edinburgh, and was much distinguished for his fidelity and zeal in discharging the duties of his function. He married Jean Annan, of the family of Auchterallan, by whom he had three sons and three daughters; William, who died minister of Borthwick; Robert, the author of the following sermons; James, lieutenant of the garrison in Stirling castle; Helen, married to Mr Thomas Paterson, minister of Borthwick; Agnes, married to Sir James Stewart of Goodtrees, Lord Advocate of Scotland; and Margaret, married to James Scot of Bristo, writer in Edinburgh. At the Restoration, Mr Traill, with other ministers, was prosecuted before the Scotch council, and, in consequence of their sentence, was imprisoned seven months in Edinburgh, and banished from the realm. His answers to his libel do him much honour, as a man and a Christian. From these, and some of his private letters still extant, he appears to have been a judicious and holy servant of our Lord Jesus Christ *.

* In the conclusion of his libel, he says to the Scottish Parliament, I must, in all humility, beg leave to intreat your Lord-ships, that you seriously consider what you do with poor ministers, who have been so long kept, not only from their liberty of preaching the gospel, but of hearing it; that so many congregations are laid desolate for so long a time, and many poor souls have put up their regrets on their death-bed, for their being deprived of a word of comfort

He afterwards returned to Scotland, and died during the time of the persecution; we have seen nothing of his in print, but a letter to his wife and children, from Holland.

His son Robert, the subject of this Memoir, was born at Ely, May 1642. After the usual course of education at home, he was sent to the university of Edinburgh, where he recommended himself to the several professors, by his capacity and diligent application to his studies. Having determined to devote himself to the work of the ministry, he pursued the study of divinity with great ardour for several years. He was intimate with the Rev. William Guthrie of Finwick, and several others of the Presbyterian ministers; and was present when Mr James Guthrie suffered death for his adherence to the peculiar principles of the Scottish church. His father being banished, had taken refuge in Holland; the family he left behind him were in great straits; in this situation our author had no settled residence. In 1666, he was obliged to lurk for some time, together with his mother and elder brother, because some copies of a book, entitled, *An Apologetic Relation*, &c. which the privy council had ordered to be publicly burnt, were found in Mrs Traill's house. At that time the Presbyterians in Scotland were treated with great severity, and the privy council, in the execution of cruel laws that had been enacted by the legislature, at the instigation of the bishops,

from their ministers in the hour of their greatest need. The Lord give you wisdom in all things, and pour out upon you the spirit of your high and weighty employment—of understanding, and of the fear of the Lord; that your government may be blessed for this land and kirk; that you may live long and happily; that your memory may be sweet and fragrant when you are gone; that you may leave your name for a blessing to the Lord's people; that your houses and families may stand long, and flourish to the years of many generations; that you may have solid peace and heart joy in the hour of the breaking of your heart strings, when pale death will sit on your eye-lids, and when man must go to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets. for what man is he that liveth and shall not see death; or can he deliver himself from the power of the grave? No, assuredly, for even those to whom he saith, Ye are gods, must die as men, seeing it is appointed for all men once to die, and after death is the judgment, and after judgment an endless eternity. Let me therefore exhort your Lordships, in the words of a great king, a great warrior also, and a holy prophet. "Be wise, and be instructed, ye judges of the earth, "serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice before him with trembling. Kiss the "Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way; when his wrath is kindled "but a little, then blessed will all those, and those only, be, who put their "trust in him."

was continually harrassing them by their tyrannical edicts, enjoining conformity to the established prelatical church, under most unreasonable civil pains and penalties, and enforcing their arbitrary and intolerant decrees by the terror of military quarter and execution. These harsh and unjustifiable methods provoked many of that oppressed and unhappy people; and inflamed their spirits to that degree, that they took up arms, and advanced the length of Pentland-hills, near Edinburgh, where they were totally defeated and dispersed in an engagement with the king's forces. Our author was suspected of being among those that were in arms; and a proclamation was issued by the council for apprehending him, which obliged him to retire to Holland, to his father, where he arrived in the beginning of the year 1667. Here he continued to study divinity, and assisted Nethenus, professor of divinity in the university of Utrecht, in the republication of Rutherford's *Examination of Arminianism.* In the preface to his edition of that book, Nethenus speaks of Mr Robert Traill as a pious, prudent, learned, and industrious young man. Coming over to Britain in 1670, he was ordained to the ministry by some Presbyterian clergymen in London. Being in Edinburgh 1677, he preached privately. Here, in the month of July, he was apprehended and brought before the privy council. To them, he acknowledged he had kept house-conventicles; being interrogate, if he had preached at field-conventicles, he referred that to proof, and declined to answer, it being criminal by law; upon which he was ordered by the council to purge himself, by oath, of preaching or hearing at them. This he peremptorily refused, as what, in justice, he could not be obliged to do in his own cause. He owned he had conversed with Mr John Welsh, on the English border. He was on these accounts sent to the Bass. Here he enjoyed the company of Messrs. Frazer of Brae, Peden, and others, confined for their attachment to the testimony of Jesus. From this prison he was relieved, by order of government, in the month of October the same year. Afterwards he returned to England, and preached in a meeting-house at Cranbrook, a small town in Kent. From this he removed to London, where for many years he was pastor to a Scottish congrega-

ion, there he laboured faithfully and successfully, performing the duties of his ministry, both on Sabbaths and in a lecture on week days; he modestly details his experience in the following words:—I have no name to come to God in but Christ. My own name is abominable to myself, and deservedly hateful in heaven. No other name is given under heaven, but that of Jesus Christ, in which a sinner may safely approach unto God. Since the Father is well pleased with this name, and the Son commands me to ask in it, and the Holy Ghost hath brought this name to me, and made it as ointment poured forth, Song i. 3. and since its savour hath reached my soul, I will try to lift it up as incense to perfume the altar and throne above; since all that ever come in this name are made welcome, I will come also, having no plea but Christ's name, no covering but his borrowed and gifted robe of righteousness. I need nothing, I will ask nothing, but what his blood hath bought (and all that, I will ask); I will expect answers of peace and acceptance only in that blessed beloved—beloved of the Father, both as his Son and our Saviour, and beloved of all that ever saw but a little of his grace and glory.

In 1691, upon the republication of Dr Crisp's works, a flood of legal doctrine seemed to break in among the Dissenting ministers and others in London—a sort of medium between Calvinism and Arminianism was proposed, and the doctrines of grace, as explained by the Reformers, were branded as Antinomianism *. In this controversy, Dr Chauncy, Messrs. Thomas Cole, Nathaniel Mather, Thomas Goodwin, younger, and others, with much ability defended the doctrines of the Gospel; among these Mr Traill appeared with much lustre, as a well informed and evangelical divine. In his sermons preached about that time, particularly on Gal. ii. 21. he clearly illucidates the doctrines of grace; and in a letter to a country minister (afterwards published,) he plainly discovers his sentiments and spirit, and throws much light on the controverted subjects. The late celebrated Hervey says of this letter,

* Almost the same controversy agitated in our own church, some years after, about the Marrow of Modern Divinity.

"This is a judicious performance, it rightly divides the word "of truth, and lays the line, with a masterly hand, between "the presumptuous Legalist, and the licentious Antinomian." This excellent man died May 1716, aged 74. During his life-time, he published a sermon in the morning exercise, on 1 Tim. iv. 16. in answer to the question, By what Means may Ministers best win Souls to Christ, 1682; afterwards, *Thirteen Sermons on the Throne of Grace*, Heb. iv. 16.; and *Sixteen Sermons on the Lord's Prayer*, John xvii. 24.; after his death was published a volume, entitled, *Stedfast Adherence to the Profession of our Faith*, from Heb. x. 23. This is prefaced and recommended by the Rev. Messrs. Tong, Nisbet, and Clarke, eminent ministers in London. In 1778 and 1779, was published another volume, transcribed from Mr Traill's MSS. eleven of these are from 1 Pet. i. 1—4. and six on Gal. ii. 21. He also wrote a short account of the Rev. William Guthrie, author of a small but excellent tract, The Trial of a Saving Interest in Christ; and a recommendation of Marshall on Sanctification.

As a number of Mr Traill's writings have been so long before the public, and have met with the universal approbation of the judicious and serious, it will be unnecessary to say much in their recommendation. They breathe that spirit of piety for which the author was so distinguished. The subjects of which they treat are intimately connected with the Christian life here, in prospect of future glory; while they exhibit the supernatural doctrines and privileges of the gospel to faith; they are improved for the excitement of believers to duty, to conformity to Jesus, for their establishment in grace and abundant comfort in the world. Matter so solid, evangelical, and heavenly, treated in a manner so practical and savoury, is fit for edifying every class of Christians, and cannot fail to be acceptable to all who have a relish for the things of the Spirit of God. They are indeed void of superfluous and gaudy ornaments. The reader of modern taste will not find in them that laboured elegance, or pomp of words, the artificial structure of sentences, or the dry reasoning, the affected declamation, or the vehement pathos of address, which may

be met with in so many works on religious topics, written at a more late period. But those who have some higher end in view in reading, than to amuse themselves with words, or the trifling gratification of a refined taste, will find precious truths, conveyed in a manner more becoming the simplicity of the gospel, and more adapted to general instruction. Of all the qualities requisite in discourses from the pulpit, or for the use of people at large, plainness of language, and perspicuity of manner, are among the principal and most needful: these characters are apparent in every part of these discourses. Considering the time in which they were composed, they are remarkably free of any thing, either in style or method, that might make them appear intricate, obscure, or offensive to Christian readers, even in this present refined age. The ministers of the New Testament, as the apostles were, are debtors both to the Greek and to the Barbarian, to the learned and unlearned; and are bound, no less than they were, to use great plainness of speech, without employing veils of any kind to conceal the revealed mystery and glory of the gospel,—that so light might be imparted to the understanding, and the truth at the same time brought home to the hearts and consciences of men. Thus did this faithful confessor and labourer in the vineyard of the Lord;—whose printed works, since his death, have been useful to many, and through a more extensive circulation, by the divine blessing, may still edify many more.

The relations of Mr Traill, in Scotland, still possess several volumes of his notes; it is also supposed, there may be in London some MSS. sermons of this excellent author in the libraries of the religious. It would be highly gratifying, were these sought out, and delivered to those, who would actively engage in their publication. It is intended to publish a volume of these, if encouragement be given.

PREFACE.

WHAT is in this book offered to your reading, was, some years since, preached, in the ordinary course of my ministry, on a week-day, with no more thought (that is, none at all) of printing it, than I had of publishing this way any thing I have preached these seven and twenty years, wherein I have been exercised in the ministry of the word, save one single sermon extorted from me about fourteen years ago *.

The publishing of such plain discourses, is singly owing to the importunity of some of the hearers, and to the assistance they gave me, by getting what I spake transcribed from two short-hand writers: without which I could not have published it; my own notes being only little scraps of heads of doctrine, and scriptures confirming them.

In the same way I had brought to me what I spake from Heb. x. 23, 24. and have it lying by me; which may also see the light, if the Lord will that I live †: and if this be accepted of such whose testimony I only value; I mean such as are sound in the faith, and exercised in the life of faith.

I know no true religion but Christianity; no true Christianity but the doctrine of Christ; of his divine person, (*the image of the invisible God*, Col. i. 15.); of his divine office, (*the Mediator betwixt God and men*, 1 Tim. ii. 5.); of his divine righteousness, (he is *the Lord our Righteousness*, Jer. xxiii. 6.; which name is also called upon his church, Jer. xxxiii. 16.); and of his divine Spirit, (which all that are his receive, Rom. viii. 9.) I know no true ministers of Christ, but such as make it their business, in their calling, to commend Jesus Christ, in his saving fulness of grace and glory, to the faith and love of men; no true

* This sermon is inserted in this volume, immediately after the sermons on *the Throne of Grace*.

† These sermons were published after the author's death. The book is intitled, *A Stedfast Adherence to the Profession of our Faith*.

Christian, but one united to Christ by faith, and abiding in him by faith and love, unto the glorifying of the name of Jesus Christ, in the beauties of gospel-holiness. Ministers and Christians of this spirit, have for many years been my brethren and companions, and, I hope, shall ever be, whithersoever the hand of God shall lead me.

Through the Lord's mercy to me, (as to many in London), I have often heard what is far more worthy of the press, than any thing I can publish. I have not been negligent in desiring such able ministers of the New Testament, to let their light shine this way; but have little prevailed. It may be this mean essay may provoke them more to that good work.

Whatever you may think of my way of managing this subject, (and indeed there is nothing in that, either as designed or expected by me, or that in itself deserveth any great regard); yet the theme itself, all must judge, who have spiritual senses, is of great importance, and always seasonable. It is concerning the throne of God's saving grace, reared up in Jesus Christ, and revealed unto men in the gospel; with the application all should make to that throne, the great blessings to be reaped by that application, and mens great need of those blessings.

This greatest of subjects is meanly, but honestly, handled in the same order in which it was preached, and mostly in the same words. Some few passages out of history are inserted, which were not spoken.

May the Lord of the harvest, who ministered this seed to the sower, make it bread to the eater, and accompany it with his blessing on some that are called to inherit a blessing, and I have my end and desire; the reader shall have the benefit; and the Lord the glory; *for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

London, ROBERT TRAILL.
March 25, 1696.

SERMONS

CONCERNING THE

THRONE OF GRACE.

SERMON I.

HEBREWS iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace, to help in time of need.

THE main drift of the blessed apostle, the Holy Ghost's penman, in this excellent epistle, is to set forth the pre-eminence of our Lord Jesus Christ, first, in his divine person, far above all angels, who are bid worship him, even when dwelling in man's nature. If the god-head of our Lord Jesus Christ be hid from the readers of this epistle, it must be a special power of the *God of this world on their unbelieving minds*, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. Will blinded men forbear to call the Son *God*, when the Father speaks so? chap. i. 8. *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.* Then the apostle speaks of his incarnation, chap. ii. 11, &c. And therewith speaks of his priesthood, chap. iii. The apostle compares Christ with, and prefers him above Moses, chap. ii.; then above Aaron as a priest, chap. vii.; and compares him with Melchizedec, an eminent type of Christ. By this epistle we may know what Paul's reasonings with the Jews were, Acts ix. 22. and xvii. 2, 3. and what is the right way of dealing with the Jews at

this day. Till Christ's divine person, and righteousness, and priesthood, have more room in the religion of the Gentiles, Christianity is not like to leaven the Jews. This doctrine of Christ's priesthood, and of the sacrifice of himself he offered in that office, the apostle doth often intermix, with suitable exhortations from it; as in the context, ver. 14. *Seeing then that we have a great high priest*, (all the Old Testament high-priests were but types and shadows of him, and were but little high-priests), *that is passed into the heavens*, (no high-priest but Christ went farther than the holy of holies, for the people's advantage), *Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.* The dignity of Christ in his advanced state, as well as his grace in his humbled state, lays Christians under a strong engagement to cleave to him with stedfast confidence. Yet for as great as this person is, and for all that he is in heaven, and in unspeakable dignity and glory there, you must not think, that he in heaven, and we on earth, can have no communion: ver. 15. *For we have not an high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities;* (Though now he hath none of his own, yet can he feel those of his people, and his feeling engageth speedy relief. The reason the apostle gives for this sympathy of Christ with his people, is from Christ's experience when on earth); *but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* The apostle delivers the mind of the Holy Ghost about Christ's sympathy negatively, *We have not an high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities:* in which manner of expression he reflects on the meanness of the Levitical priests, to whom it was impossible to know and feel all the infirmities of the people, for whom yet they appeared before God; and he implies the affirmative strongly, *We have an high-priest which can be* (and is) *touched with the feeling of our infirmities.* How a sinless man as Christ ever was, can be touched with the feeling of the infirmities of sinners, and many of these infirmities sinful ones; how a glorified man, as Christ now is, exalted to, and possessed of the highest glory and bliss, can be, and is touched with the feeling of all the infirmities of all his people, is what the word plainly reveals to be believed; but it is not to be fully known till we come to hea-

ven. But he is the head, and all his people are *his body, his members, of his flesh, and of his bones*, Eph. v. 30. A marvellous word! Can the flesh be torn, and the bones be broken, and the head not feel it? Though he be glorified above what we can conceive, he is a living, sensible, and compassionate head; and as nearly and closely united to all his members now, as when they *saw with their eyes, and heard with their ears, and with their hands handled the word of life*, 1 John i. 1. There is nothing ails a poor believer in Christ, there is no groan riseth from his distressed heart, but it is immediately felt at the tender heart of the Lord Jesus, at the Father's right-hand. We would groan and sing with the same breath, if we believed this firmly.

In my text, there is a most blessed exhortation, from this same ground of Christ's sympathy in heaven, unto a bold approaching to the throne of grace. The nativeness and strength of the inference, is obvious to the most ordinary attention. The exhortation is unto the improving of the greatest privilege, an erected and revealed throne of grace; and that in the practice of the greatest duty, believing approaching unto his throne, or unto God sitting on this throne of grace.

What I would take up in, and handle, in speaking to these words, shall be the resolution of four weighty questions, which should be in the hearts of all worshippers of God.

1. The first great question is, *Where may I find God?* This was Job's question and wish: Job xxiii. 3. *O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!* And that this *seat* was a throne of grace to Job, is evident from ver. 6. This text tells you, God is on a *throne of grace:* a fit place for God to be sought in, and where only he can be found graciously by a sinner.

2. The second question is, *How should we come to God on this throne? Let us come boldly*, saith the apostle. The original word signifieth, *coming freely; with free, open, bold speaking, pouring out all our hearts and minds to him.* Let us come, without making use of saint or angel to introduce us to this throne. Any poor sinner may come himself alone to this court, and that boldly, without fear of being repulsed.

3. The third question is the hardest, *What ground hath a*

sinner for this boldness? The ground the apostle gives for it, is hinted in the word *therefore*, which relates to ver. 14, 15. because of *Jesus the Son of God, our great high-priest in heaven.* If we had not such an high-priest, ministering in glory at the high altar above, no sinner could come boldly to the throne of grace on earth. So he argues, chap. x. 19, 20, 21, 22.

4. The last question is, *What shall we get, and for what may we come to this throne of grace?* The apostle speaks fully to this in the text: Let us come, *that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* These precious things, *mercy* and *grace*, are scattered round this throne. Any poor needy creature should come for a saving alms from this throne, and may have it for the coming.

HEAD I. The first of these I would begin with. *Where is God to be found?* The apostle tells us, on a *throne of grace.* The word is only here; no where else in the scriptures is the word to be found: but what is signified by it, is frequently in the Old and New Testament, as we shall hear. But though the phrase, *The throne of grace*, be only once named in this, Heb. iv. 16.; yet the thing signified is so precious, and the expression of it so savoury, significant, and suitable, that this form of speaking, *The throne of grace*, is become famous, known, and used among Christians, and will doubtless be till the end of time. As long as God hath a mind to give mercy and grace, as long as any of the children of men are sensibly needy of grace and mercy, and askers and receivers thereof from the Lord, (and that will be till the heavens be no more), this throne of grace will be plied and praised.

I would first consider the proper meaning of this word, *a throne of grace.* It is obvious, that the apostle, in this epistle, doth every where (if I may use a much abused word) *christen* the Old Testament types, and gives them New Testament names, and applies them to the doctrine of Christ he is teaching the Christian Jews he writes to. The Old Testament church knew what a high-priest was, what his institution, office, and performance were in the tabernacle in the wilderness, and in the temple of Solomon in Canaan: but both Aaron and his successors, and the tabernacle and temple, were but types

and shadows of Jesus Christ in his person and office. There was the holiest of all, into which the high-priest went alone, and only once a-year; in this was the ark of the covenant, and the mercy-seat, and cherubims covering it: whence these common expressions in the Old Testament, of *God's dwelling between the cherubims*, and of believers *trusting in the shadow of his wings*. Now, the holiest of all was their type of heaven; and the ark, cherubims, and mercy-seat, were all but *shadows* (as the apostle calls them, Heb. x. 1.) of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of that peace with God, and access to God, that he hath wrought ought for men. More particularly, that most sacred of all things in the Jewish Old Testament worship, that was called the *mercy-seat*, the apostle calls a *throne of grace;* thereby teaching us, that whatever of divine grace was revealed and tendered to, or perceived and received by the faith of the Old Testament believers, in their right use of these sacred old institutions of God to his church, the same, with great advantage, believers under the New Testament have in Jesus Christ, the body, antitype, and substance of them.

We find three most solemn things in the Old Testament, in which the mercy-seat (the type of the throne of grace in the New Testament) was applied unto. 1. The most solemn approach was made unto God, in the high-priest's going in once a-year to the holiest of all, where the mercy-seat was. This was made, not by the people in their own persons; nor by any ordinary Levite, who were privileged with a greater nearness to God than the people, Numb. xvi. 9.; nor by any of the inferior priests of the house of Aaron, to which family the office of priesthood was by divine appointment confined; nor by the high-priest himself, but only once a-year, at a determinate time, and with many appointed ceremonies of preparation and performance. Some tell us of a custom in their worship, that music, by singing and instruments, was used by the people, to express their joy and praise, when the high-priest returned safe out from that sacred and awful place, the holy of holies. 2. The most solemn atonement for the sins of Israel was made at the mercy-seat. This was done in that yearly entrance of the high-priest into the holiest of all, Lev. xvi. 12, 13. especially verse 14. *And he* (Aaron the first of

that order of priests) *shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy-seat eastward: and before the mercy-seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.* Ver. 30. *On that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord.* 3. The most solemn answers were given by God to their high-priest, Exod. xxv. 17,—22. where we have the institution of the mercy-seat, and the form of it: *And there* (saith the Lord) *I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee;* and again, Exod. xxx. 6. What the Old Testament Urim and Thummim was, and what their Shechinah was, neither Jew now, nor Christian know, though they guess; only that they were special manifestations of the grace, and favour, and mind of God, which expired with, and some of them, it is thought, before the end of that ministration. But all these three glories, and dignities, and advantages of their mercy-seat, are all to be found in Christ Jesus; who represents his people before God, and presents them to him; who hath made the perfect atonement for all his Israel; and who declares to his church all the saving will of God, which he heard and received of his Father.

The apostle here in this epistle, and in this text, would have all believers in Christ to know, that the New Testament throne of grace is the same in substance with, and with great advantage above the Old Testament mercy-seat. See Heb. ix. 4,—8.

The truth I would speak to is this:

Doct. *That God in the gospel sits on a throne of grace, and from it calls and invites sinners to come unto him.*

Let us come to the throne of grace, certainly means, *Let us now come to God sitting on a throne of grace;* let us take both direction and encouragement to come to God, because he is on a throne of grace.

In handling of this point of doctrine, I would shew three things:

I. What this *throne of grace* is, and how distinguished from other thrones of God spoke of in the word.

II. Why it is so called, *a throne*, and *a throne of grace.*

III. What *coming* to this throne is.

I. *What is this throne of grace, and how distinguished from other thrones of God spoke of in the word?*

These other I would first name, to prevent mistakes.

1. We find a throne of glory much spoke of: a throne of the essential, incomprehensible glory of God. This no man can approach to. Of this the apostle speaks, 1 Tim. vi. 16. *He dwelleth in light that no man can approach to, whom no man hath seen, nor can see.* Marvellous is this light. We find the more light there be in or about a person or thing, the more easily and clearly it is perceived: as the sun is such a glorious body, that though it be at a vast distance from the earth we dwell on, we yet can take it up with our eyes immediately. As soon as it shines, we can see it, because of its light. It is its own light, and nothing else, that doth, or can discover it. If the sun did withdraw its own light, all the eyes of men, and all the artificial fire and light men can make, would never help us to find it out. But such is the majesty of God, that he is *clothed with it*, Psal. xciii. 1. Men are dazzled and confounded by a little ray of his glory: *With God is terrible majesty*, Job xxxvii. 22. This is not the throne we are called to come unto. They are but triflers in religion, that know not in their experience how overwhelming the views and thoughts of God's majesty and glory are, when he is not seen as on a throne of grace. *I remembered God, and was troubled*, saith one saint, Psal. lxxvii. 3. *I am troubled at his presence; when I consider, I am afraid of him*, saith another, Job xxiii. 15. No wonder Manoah said unto his wife, *We shall surely die, because we have seen God*, Judg. xiii. 22. when a view of the heavenly glory of Jesus Christ makes John, who was wont to lean on his bosom in his humbled state, to *fall down at his feet as dead*, Rev. i. 17.

2. There is a throne of God's government of the world oft spoke of, Psal. ix. 4, 7. On this throne God sits, and rules all things at his pleasure, and in infinite wisdom. This throne is to be believingly regarded by us; but it is not the throne of grace that sinners are called to come unto for grace and mercy.

3. There is a throne of God's justice spoken of. This is that throne David deprecates his being brought before, Psal. cxliii. 2. *Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.* If a man be wronged and oppressed by men stronger than he, he may appeal to this throne of justice, and expect redress. But if a man's business be with God, he should be afraid of this throne of justice. Men are oft proud and vain in their thoughts, and before others: but if the Lord call them before this high court of justice, they will surely be cast: Job ix. 2, 3. *How should a man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.* When God sits on a throne of justice, to judge men according to his law and their works, nothing but condemnation can justly be pronounced on sinners. Whoever he be of sinful Adam's seed that expecteth saving favour from God's throne of justice, will find himself wofully deceived.

4. We find the throne of the last judgment. Before this all must appear, 2 Cor. v. 10. Rev. xx. 12. This is not the throne of grace in the text. No grace nor mercy is shown to any from this throne, but to them that have plied and sped at the throne of grace before. When our Lord *comes, and sits on the throne of his glory,* Matth. xxv. 31. no sinner that hath despised his grace now, will find any quarter then, Luke xix. 27.

What then is this throne of grace? It is God in Christ dealing with men according to the grace of the gospel. It is *God in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their trespasses,* 2 Cor. v. 19. *It is Christ set forth by God to be a propitiation,* Rom. iii. 25. This is the true *mercy-seat,* or *throne of grace,* or *propitiation,* 1 John ii. 2. and iv. 10. This is the new court or throne erected by God, and declared in the gospel, to which sinful man is invited to come.

II. Why is it called *a throne* and *a throne of grace?*

Passing what is said of the apostle's alluding to the mercy-seat in the tabernacle and temple of old,

1. It is called *a throne,* because of the glory and majesty of God manifested here. God's condescending to display and dispense his grace and mercy to sinners, is no debasing of

God, but an advancing of his glory. When he gives grace, he acts royally, and as a king, with majesty. Araunah's offering to David, is said to be *like a king*, 2 Sam. xxiv. 23. He was no king, but a subject; but he had a free, noble heart. The Lord on this throne of grace, dispenseth all acts of grace with great majesty, and as a king; but not as a King Judge, and Ruler, but as a King Benefactor, and Giver. This royalty of grace shines, 1. In the greatness of the gifts, grace, and mercy; vastly above all that the creation can give. 2. In the manner of giving; free, sovereignly free. Grace and mercy is his own, and he doth with them as he will. When Moses prays, Exod. xxxiii. 18. *I beseech thee, shew me thy glory*, we cannot conceive what was in his holy heavenly heart. He was now just come down from the mount the first time; he is going up again to spend other forty days there, in such communion with God as never mere man enjoyed before or since out of heaven; he had prevailed with God for Israel, and hath a most gracious answer, ver. 17. *And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.* What means Moses then by this prayer? ver. 18. Whatever he meant, the Lord's answer is much to be observed, ver. 19. *And he said, I will make all my goodness* (or beauty) *pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee.* (What is in this name that hath so much of glory and goodness in it, as should satisfy such a mighty hungerer for more of God, as Moses was?) *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.* God's glory shines highly, in his being the sovereign disposer of his own grace and mercy; and happy is the believer that adores this glorious sovereignty. Paul in Rom. ix. 15,—25. makes a deep improvement of it. Jer. xvii. 12. *A glorious high throne from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary.* See then that you, in all your pleadings for grace and mercy, remember that you are before a high stately throne. Approaches to God on the throne of grace, should be managed with the deepest reverence and humility. So did the publican, when he came to it, Luke xviii. 13. *God be merciful* (propitious) *to me a sinner*, (or *me the sinner*, the great singular sinner. So the Greek

runs, as Luke vii. 37, 39.) The deepest, profoundest adoration of the glorious majesty of God, is performed by a self-condemned sinner, pleading at this throne for the obtaining of the sovereign free grace of God. *Lastly*, It is called *a throne*, because grace reigns and is enthroned here: Rom. v. 21. *Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.* Blessed reign! and blessed are all that are under the reign and dominion of the grace of God. Sin reigns through the unrighteousness of the first Adam unto eternal death, if men be let alone, and if grace do not break this reign of sin. And grace reigns through the righteousness of the second Adam unto eternal life. And nothing can dethrone grace; it will prevail, and reach its end, eternal life, in all it falls upon. O that captives to Satan, and slaves to sin and the law, would long to be under the reign of this stately power, the grace of God! and that believers themselves would give a more free and large subjection to it!

2. It is called *a throne of grace*,

1*st*, Because grace erected and reared it up: Psal. lxxxix. 2. *Mercy shall be built up for ever.* Nothing but grace and mercy framed the throne of grace. I may allude to the Lord's stately words to Job, chap. xxxviii. 4, 5, 6. speaking of the first creation, (but this throne of grace was fixed before, as the King himself saith, Prov. viii. 23. *I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was*), *Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?*—and, *Who laid the corner-stone thereof?* No creature was on the council; it is a divine contrivance. But, now it is revealed, our faith, on the ground of this revelation, may, and should go back, and take a refreshing view of this eternal contrivance. The Lord builds a house of mercy, that a company of sinners may dwell in, with him, for ever. What laid the corner-stone of this throne, but grace? What brings in the inhabitants, preserves them, and perfects them, but grace? For whom is it prepared, and by whom shall this house of mercy be possessed, and with whom shall it be filled, but with *vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.* Rom. ix. 23.

2*dly*, It is called *a throne of grace*, because grace hath here, and here only, a glorious display and discovery. Till men get

a sight of God in Christ, they cannot tell what the grace of God is. Search heaven and earth, you can never get a view of God's grace, till ye come to this throne. You may see God's infinite power, and wisdom, and goodness, written in great characters, in the great volume of creation and providence; but till ye come to know God in Christ on this throne, you can never see that divine dainty, and saving blessing, the free grace of God; grace, as an everlasting fountain in the heart of God, pouring down, streaming forth eternal salvation on ruined unworthy sinners. Men should make a visit to the throne of grace, if they had no other errand but to get a sight of this precious thing, the grace of God. A right sight of it is saving. Believers should long to be in heaven, if they had no other errand, than to see the spring-head of that flood of grace that came down from heaven, to drag them out of hell, and to draw them up to heaven.

3*dly*, It is called *a throne of grace*, because all the acts and sentences passed at this new court, are all acts of grace. All the blessings given from this throne, are all of mere grace. Nothing is here but grace: John i. 17. *The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* Was there no grace nor truth under the law? Yes, a great deal; but it all belonged to Jesus Christ. There was grace under the law, but none but what related to Jesus Christ. There was truth under the law, but only as Christ was pointed at; otherwise all were but vain and beggarly rudiments, and empty dark shadows. The Jews see nothing of Christ in the Old Testament, and therefore find neither the saving mercy nor saving truth of God in it. And it is much worse with men (Christians I cannot call them) that see as little of Christ in the New Testament. Take the chain of salvation, and all the links of it, as the apostle names them, Rom. viii. 29, 30. and all of them are of grace. We are chosen by grace; we are given to Christ by grace; redeemed by him by grace; by grace we are justified through that redemption; by the same grace we are adopted; by the same grace we are saved, *by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;* and by grace we shall be glorified. And they that will not claim these blessings, and hold them by this tenor of free grace,

I dare not say that they shall never have them, (for this grace can overcome its greatest enemies); but I may say, that they have at present no part or portion in this matter; and when they come to partake of grace, and to *know the grace of God in truth*, as Col. i. 6. they will be of another mind, and count it the best tenor to hold all by, even by free grace: yea, after all the riches of grace poured forth on believers in this life, when they come to receive the crown of glory, they receive it as humbly, yea more than they did any former act of grace from this throne. The *overcomer by the blood of the Lamb*, will receive the crown from his glorious Redeemer, as humbly, and with owning it as a gift of grace, as much as ever he did receive a pardon in that blood, when his head was on the block, and the ax of law and justice lifted up to cut him off for his iniquity. There may be proud pleaders for (or rather presumers and expecters of) the crown of glory, but no proud receivers of it. We must *look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*, Jude, ver. 21. Merit and worth are only for hell; and they have no room in heaven, nor in the way to it. Justice reigns in hell, and grace in heaven. So all will find that come to heaven; and so must they all know and believe that would be there. Sinners that are for merit, will find it sadly in hell. Mens merit makes hell, and Christ's merit makes heaven, Rom. vi. 23.

4thly, It is called *a throne of grace*, because the glory of grace is the last and highest end of the building of this throne, and of all the acts of grace dispensed at it, and from it. That proud monarch spoke vainly and wickedly, Dan. iv. 30. and was quickly by God punished severely for his sin. If we may be allowed to allude to such words, we may say of the throne of grace, *Is it not that high throne that God hath built for the house of his kingdom, by the might of his power, and for the honour of the majesty of his grace?* Are any *chosen in Christ*, and *predestinated to the adoption of children by him?* It is *to the praise of the glory of his grace*, Eph. i. 4, 5, 6. Do they *believe* by grace? It is *to the praise of his glory*, ver. 12. Are they *sealed*, and at last possessed of heaven? That is *to the praise of his glory*, ver. 14. Are they *quickened* when *dead in sin*, and advanced in and by Christ Jesus? This is *to the praise of his*

grace, Eph. ii. 4, 7. All the blessings in time and eternity that the heirs of grace enjoy, are all to the praise and glory of that grace they spring from. We read in the word of none of the counsels of God before the creation of all things, but of his purpose of saving a company of poor sinful men by Jesus Christ; and of no other design in this purpose, but to magnify his grace in saving of them this way. So much of the signification of this word, *a throne of grace.*

III. *What is it to come unto this throne of grace?*

Though the prosecuting of the exhortation in this text will open up the nature of this coming more fully, yet I would speak somewhat of it in this place.

1. This coming implies a state of distance from this throne in them that are called to come. This is called *being far off*, Eph. ii. 13. And this state all men by nature are in. Men are in God's eye and hand: *He is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being*, Acts xvii. 27, 28.; as the psalmist speaks excellently in Psalm cxxxix. of the nearness of men to God, and of his omnipresence and omniscience. But his gracious presence, as on a throne of grace, is far from all men by nature, and they far from it. This presence is far from man's knowledge; there is no knowing of it but by revelation: far from mens attainment; for *no man can come, unless he be drawn of God*, John vi. 44.: far from their experience, and far from their love; for they *are alienated from the life of God*, Eph. iv. 18. And *in his favour is life*, Psal. xxx. 5. and in nothing else.

2. It is also implied in this call to come, that there is a gracious provision made and revealed by God for the removal and making up of his distance, and getting of a gracious nearness to God. This is in the constitution and revelation of this throne of grace.

3. That the improving of this provision is mens duty, and should be their exercise, in order to possess and enjoy the privilege and advantage of this provision.

What then is this coming to the throne of grace?

1. It is in believing on Jesus Christ. This is the first approach to the throne of grace. He is the propitiation, and

mercy-seat, and throne of grace, 1 John iv. 10. Believing on him, is *coming to him*, John vi. 35. It is *coming to the Father by him*, John xiv. 6. It is *believing on God by him*, 1 Pet. i. 21. It is *believing on him, and on him that sent him*, John xii. 44. Believing on Jesus Christ, is an employing of Christ in way of trust, as to all his fulness of grace, and our utter indigence thereof. Whatever a man do, whatever exercises of religion he be taken up in, he never comes to the throne of grace, till his heart and soul go forth towards Jesus Christ for righteousness and life. The first right step heavenward, is saving faith in Christ. Nothing savingly good can precede it, and all saving good follows it: for faith unites the man to Christ, and all the fruits of holiness and righteousness spring from the virtue of the vine Christ; with whom the believer hath first union by grace, and then communion of Christ's grace, by which he lives, and works, and grows.

2. Coming to this throne, is acted in all acts of gospel-worship, and in the use of all gospel-ordinances. They all belong to the throne of grace, are the institutions of this throne, and appointed as means wherein we should approach to it; and which, when blessed by the appointer of them, do convey to us the blessings of this throne. Of them there are several. 1. Prayer. This is coming to the throne of grace, if rightly managed. Though *asking* is not expressed in this verse, yet it is strongly implied, both in the commanded *coming*, and in the expressed *obtaining of mercy*, and *finding of grace to help in time of need*. All that make a fashion of prayer, do not come to the throne of grace; yet all that pray rightly, do come to it. And because this approaching to the throne of grace by and in prayer, is plainly hinted in the text, and is so commonly understood by Christians, I would have my eye principally upon it in handling this scripture. 2. There is the word read, preached, and meditated on, that is another principal means in which men should approach to the throne of grace. In prayer we pour out our heart before this throne, and express our desires to him that sitteth on it. In the word the King on this throne delivers his will and mind to us; and we should come to hear it, and receive the law from his mouth. Cornelius expressed an excellent frame for this ordinance, Acts

x. 33. *We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.* This word is *the word of his grace*, Acts xx. 32. It is the proclamation of his grace to men. 3. Praising of God, is a coming to the throne of grace. This is the sacrifice we should offer by our High Priest, Heb. xiii. 15. Who minds this as they ought? If we want, we ask; and so we should. But where is the Christian that can say, Though I had nothing to ask, I would yet go to the throne of grace, that I might praise him that sits on it? 4. Receiving of the Lord's supper, is a coming to the throne of grace; to feast on the king of grace; to feed on that body broken for us, and that blood shed for us, that is given to us in the word for food to our souls, and is given to us by his command, in bread and wine at his table; that in eating and drinking of them, we may remember him, and shew forth his death till he come; glorying, and avowing, and boasting, that we have our salvation, and all our hopes of it, built and fixed on that man Jesus Christ, that was rejected by the builders in his time, and hath had little better entertainment since, because they knew him not.

Application. Is there a throne of grace; and doth God sitting on it invite and call men to come to it, or to him on it? We are called to admire, adore, and praise the grace that shines in this constitution of God, and call to men. That person is sadly out in his praises, (and such are never right in their prayers), that doth not deeply admire, and heartily praise for this mercy of a throne of grace. We account a man ill employed in prayer, that asks many things of God, but forgets to ask the one thing needful: Is he any better employed in praise, who gives thanks for many mercies, but neglects or forgets to praise for the greatest of all mercies, the throne of grace? before which all prayer and praise must come, if accepted, and for which highest praises should be given. In order to the raising of more sense of this highest favour, that God now deals with us on a throne of grace, consider,

1. The deep condescendence of grace that appears in this dispensation. There is a glorious and stately stooping in it. The Lord had resolved in his own heart from eternity, to have

the company of many of Adam's offspring for ever with him in heaven. He seeth them fallen into a deep pit, out of which they can never get out by themselves. God and man by sin are at a vast distance. Sinners cannot remove it, nor make so much as one step towards God. Saved they cannot be, unless the distance be removed; saved they must be, because of his unalterable purpose. In this case, saith the Lord of mere grace, if men cannot ascend up to me, I will descend down to them, and draw them up again to me. This condescendence of grace we should admire and praise. When David had got a gracious message and promise from God, (and Christ and the throne of grace was in it), 2 Sam. vii. he sits down as a man amazed before the Lord, and most significantly expresseth his admiration and praise, *Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house? and is this the manner of man? and what can David say more?* And what can David say better? To be swallowed up of wonder, is the best and highest praising. Who can forbear wondering at grace, that considers duly whose grace it is, where it finds us, and whither it brings us? When Paul speaks of it, (and it was his usual theme), how sweetly doth he discourse of it? Eph. ii. 1. Where did this grace find him and the Ephesians? what was their case and qualification for grace? They were *dead in sin, walking after the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, working powerfully in them as children of disobedience;* they were *fulfilling the desires and lusts of the flesh, and of the mind;* they were *by nature the children of wrath, even as others.* Who can be lower, viler, and baser, except they that are in hell itself? yet in this case and condition grace made its first visit to them. All that this saving grace falls on, are lost and undone sinners, men at the very brink of hell. An elect child of God is worst and most sinful the moment preceding his conversion. Paul was at his worst, Acts ix. when grace fell upon him. If there be nothing but the power of grace that can subdue the corruption of nature; if this corruption grow in its strength, till that subduing power of grace be applied; and if there be no middle state betwixt death and life, (and these have been reckoned gospel-truths); how plain is it, that a sinner is at his worst when saving grace first comes upon

him? 2. Whither did this grace bring Paul, and the Ephesians, and so all Christians? Out of the grave of sin, unto a new life, and up to *heavenly places in Christ Jesus*, ver. 4, 5, 6. O what a mighty arm hath the grace of God! It is nothing for grace to pull a man out of hell, and set him down in heaven. When shall this *arm of Jehovah be revealed?* When will perishing sinners long for a saving pull of the grace of God? 3. What is all this great work of grace for? ver. 7. *That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus.* As if the apostle had said, "You and I cannot sufficiently, in our time and age, "admire this kindness, grace, and riches of grace through "Christ Jesus, that we have received: but as long as this "world lasts, and as long as there are receivers of this same "grace in future ages, (and that will be as long as the world "lasts; for the world lasts for the sake of the throne of grace, "and for what God hath to do on it, and to give from it), "there will be praisers of this grace; for every generation of "receivers of this grace, owe praises for all the grace bestow-"ed on all that have been before them. And when this "world is at an end, there is a better world that shall succeed "it, wherein better and higher praises will be given for ever. "There is no other music, but the praises of free grace, in "heaven; and none shall sing its praises there, but the happy "receivers of it here."

2. Consider the infinite wisdom of this contrivance of a throne of grace for sinners. The Lord wisely consulted poor man's case, his sinfulness, his misery, and his infirmity. No where else can God and sinners meet in peace, but at this throne of grace. Here is *the manifold wisdom of God*, Ephesians iii. 10. Grace *abounds in all wisdom and prudence*, Eph. i. 8. *Yet not* according to the sorry rules of *the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes* (or great, leading men) *of this world, that come to nought: but the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom (hid to them that are lost*, 2 Cor. iv. 3.) *which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*, 1 Cor. ii. 6, 7, 8. God and holy angels may meet in peace, whenever he is pleased to manifest

his glory to them; though they be sensible of their meanness as creatures, and deeply humble before his majesty. But where God and angels meet comfortably, God and sinners cannot meet comfortably. That light and manifestation of divine glory that makes a holy angel happy, would confound and destroy a sinful man, Isa. vi. 1,—5. The seraphims adore humbly and praise; Isaiah, a sinner, sinks; he is terrified with the sight, and with the song. And yet this was a sight of Christ, John xii. 41.; but his divine majesty and holiness as God was then represented to him, which terrified the prophet. But when sin is forgiven by an act of grace, ver. 6, 7. then, upon the Lord's saying, *Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?* Isaiah answered, *Here am I, send me*, ver. 8. Now I have tasted the grace of my Lord, I will run his errands; let him send me where and on what he pleaseth.

3. Consider how costly the erecting of this throne of grace was. It was a dear building. The throne of God's essential glory is in his own super-excellent being, and falls under no acts of the divine will. When he had a mind to rear up a throne of glory to his name, in creating a world, there was no more needful but his word of power, his almighty *Fiat, Let it be;* and all things sprung up out of nothing, in marvellous order, and beauty, and goodness. But when a throne of grace is to be erected for sinners, there is more to be done. Here God's own Son must be made man; in that nature must be charged with their sins; and must discharge that debt, by bearing the wrath of God, and curse of the law, even unto death. Rom. iii. 25. the apostle gives us a description of the throne of grace: *God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation*, a mercy-seat, a throne of grace. But his blood went for it: law and justice exacted it, and Christ paid it. On this comes forth the blessed proclamation of grace, "Whoever he be of "lost mankind that will come to this throne of grace by faith, "and will receive his justification in and by this blood, and "will trust to it only, shall never come into condemnation." This Paul preached, Acts xiii. 38, 39. What is this grace revealed for? Rom. iii. 26. *To declare at this time God's righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.* We all know that God is just, and the condemner

of transgressors of his holy law: but how the gospel is framed so as that God's justice may appear in justifying of a believing sinner, is far deeper, and more hardly known and believed. But take in but these three things, and it will appear,

1*st*, God was just, and the punisher of the sins of the elect laid on Jesus. God's sending of his Son, and laying of the sins of his people on him, was an act of amazing grace and mercy. But the exacting the debt of sin of him, when the Father laid it on, and the Son took it on him, was of justice, and strict glorious justice. Never did justice shine so in its glory and purity, as in bruising the Son of God for the sins that were laid on him. The sending of millions to hell for their sins, (and all must go thither that have them to answer for, (and all such have them all to answer for, who offer to pay their debt with their own coin), and have no interest in Christ's undertaking), is a display of divine justice, that men may grumble at, but cannot hinder. The praise of spotless justice will rise up to eternity by the torments of the damned. But he that is ignorant of God's righteousness, can far less conceive the glory of justice in bruising a sinless man, who was also *in the form of God, and counted it no robbery to be equal with God*, Phil. ii. 6. (though some in our days think it blasphemy to say so), a person beloved of the Father above all creature-thought; and that for the sins of others, and they also the beloved of the Father in his eternal purpose.

2*dly*, God is just in not exacting the same debt of sin twice; both of his Son, and of his people, in whose stead he paid it.

3*dly*, God is just in discharging of his Son, from whom he hath received the full and covenanted satisfaction for sin; and he is just in discharging them for whom this satisfaction was given. He is just in *raising Christ from the dead*; and *he arose for our justification*, Rom. iv. 25, 26. We are *justified freely by his grace*; but this free, free grace flows to us through the channel of *redemption by the blood of Christ*. And both this grace and this blood is set forth in the gospel to our faith; and must be applied unto by faith, and applied to us in believing. Whatever the thoughts of men be of these things, free grace and dear blood are the stay of all the redeemed on earth, and the everlasting song of all the glorified in heaven.

4. and *lastly*, To raise your thoughts of the greatness of this favour, of having a throne of grace to come to, consider what rich provisions are made at this throne for sinners. This the text speaks of, and we shall in order handle them. We shall only now say a few words. There is no court in all God's dominions that a sinner can come to, and find any mercy or grace, but only at this throne of grace. If you talk of law, or justice, or equity, these are all frightful courts to sensible sinners. They know their cause and case is bad; and that if they come to any bar but that of the throne of grace, they must be cast. But at this throne of grace, they that have nothing, may get all things; they that deserve nothing, may get every thing; they that deserve wrath, may obtain mercy; they that are cast and condemned at the court of justice, may be acquitted and freed from all sentences, and be adjudged to eternal life, by the grace of God in Christ Jesus. All that is needful to salvation, is dispensed at this throne. Yet all that is given, is old in the purpose of grace from eternity, old in the everlasting covenant, old in the purchase of Jesus Christ: only it is newly given according to the sinner's necessity: 2 Tim. i. 9. *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling*, (this was done as yesterday; but how came we by this saving and this calling?), *not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace*, (Paul still opposeth works to grace, and grace to works, in the matter of justification and salvation; and so doth his Lord and Master that taught him, and so do all that know either grace or works rightly), *which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began.* Let this be still kept in mind, that whatever you can need, there is a suitable and abundant supply to be had at this throne of grace.

I shall conclude this exercise, with naming two sorts of people that will be specially welcome to the throne of grace.

1. They that come to the throne of grace soon and early; I mean, young people, children, that begin betimes to be courtiers and attendants at this throne: Prov. viii. 17. *I love them that love me; and those that seek me early, shall find me*, saith the King on this throne of grace. O that young people would try and use this throne of grace betimes! They would find Christ very gracious to them. He would discover his

beauty, and give them of his love, that would cool their thirst after sinful pleasures. They might grow rich and strong in grace, before they be old; or if they die young, they should be transplanted to a better soil, and be nearer the Sun of Righteousness, than they can be in this world. Never did a saint got safe ashore in heaven bewail his arriving there too soon.

2. They that come to the throne of grace to get, and not to give. Take heed to your spirits in this matter. When you come to the throne of grace, come to receive out of Christ's fulness, and come not to bring grace with you to add to Christ's store. He loves to give, and glories in giving; but he scorns to receive grace from you; and in truth you have none but what he gives. Bring your wants to him to supply, but bring not your fulness to brag of. Spread your sins before this throne with shame and sorrow, and plead for a gracious pardon; but take heed you bring not your sorrow, tears, and repentance, nay, nor your faith itself, as a plea for that pardon. How abominable is it to Christians ears, and how much more unto Christ's, to hear a man plead thus for pardon: "Here is my repentance; "where is thy pardon? Here is my faith; where is thy "justification?" I know men abhor to say so. But take good heed, lest any thought bordering on it enter into thy heart. Faith is the tongue that begs pardon? faith is the hand that receives it, it is the eye that seeth it; but it is no price to buy it. Faith useth the gospel-plea for pardon; but itself, neither in habit nor act, is the plea itself. That is only Christ's blood. Christ's blood goes for the remission of your sins, if ever they be forgiven: and is the only plea to be heard at the throne of grace. There are too many like the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11. It would seem by Christ's words, verse 14. that both came for justification. *The Pharisee stood, and prayed thus with himself; God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are,——or as this publican.* Poor wretch! The publican was a far better man than he, as Christ testifieth. He came to the throne of grace, like a man that would carry something away. It is a rule of this court, Luke i. 53. *He hath filled the hungry with good things,*

but *the rich he hath sent empty away.* According to this rule, the Lord dealt with the Pharisee and the publican; and so will he deal with you, as you are like the one or the other, in your approaches to, and pleadings at the throne of grace.

SERMON II.

HEB. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

I DID take up this exhortation, as containing an answer to four considerable questions that usually are in the hearts of them that draw near to God seriously. 1. *Where may we find him?* On *a throne of grace.* Seek him no where else; for no where else is he to be graciously found. 2. *How shall we come to this throne? Boldly,* with confidence. 3. *What is the ground of this boldness?* It had need be a great and solid ground on which a sinner may build boldness in his approaching to God. This ground is hinted by the apostle in the word *therefore.* Wherefore? Because of *our great High Priest, the Son of God, in heaven,* ver. 14, 15. Though there be nothing more commonly said and owned, than that all men are sinners, and that all the acceptance of a sinner with God is through Jesus Christ; yet I can assure you, that when a person sees and knows what it is to be a sinner, and know what God is, it is a wonderful difficulty to believe, that it is possible that such a sinner and such a God should ever meet in peace. People's dry notions and opinions of Jesus Christ, if there be no more, will soon be blown away, with a deep sight of the sinfulness of sin, and of the majesty of God provoked thereby. 4. The last question is, *What shall we get by coming? and what should we come for?* The greatest blessings; *mercy* and *grace.* These

blessings are comprehensive of all things needful to make a sinner happy.

To the first of these I began to speak last day, *That God hath erected a throne of grace in the gospel, to which men are invited to come.* What this throne of grace is, is spoke to; and that this throne of grace is to be distinguished from all other thrones of God spoken of in the word. The throne of his essential glory is unapproachable by all creatures. The throne of his justice is dreadful to all sinners. We should pray against our coming before this throne, Psalm cxliii. 2. He must be a proud ignorant fool that would offer to come and plead at its bar; for here all acts and sentences pass according to strict law and justice; and the law is an everlasting condemner of all sinners. There is also the throne of the Judge at the last day. But this throne is not yet set, though it will surely be; and we know not how soon, and should prepare for our appearing before it, 2 Cor. v. 9, 10.

But this throne of grace is the gracious manifestation of *God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself,* 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. This is *the light of the glory of God's grace shining in the face of Jesus Christ,* 2 Cor. iv. 6. And to coming to this throne of grace, and to God in Christ dispensing his grace from it, we are here exhorted and encouraged.

In pursuing of this exhortation, I would,

I. Prove that all should come.
II. Show who will come.
III. And who shall be specially welcome.

I. That all ought to come to the throne of grace. All sinners that hear of it, should improve this great privilege, and seek the enjoyment of God's grace and mercy in Jesus Christ.

1. Because God is not otherwise approachable by men in accepted worship. *No man cometh unto the Father but by me;* saith Christ, John xiv. 6. The light of nature teacheth all men in some measure, that there is a God, and somewhat of *his eternal power and god-head,* Rom. i. 20.; and that this

God should be worshipped. Therefore some sort of wo ship is performed by all sorts of heathens, who are yet *witho God*, and that because *without Christ*, and therefore *witho hope in the world*, Eph. ii. 12. Never was there, nor will there b nor can there be, any gracious approach unto God, nor ar address received favourably by God, but at this throne of grac Therefore whatever may be said of the zealous devotio and of the moral principles and practices of the heathen yet never any of them did, nor could offer up an acceptabl prayer unto God, nor obtain a gracious answer from him not only because they worshipped an unknown God, Act xvii. 23. Gal. iv. 8. but mainly because they worshipped no at this throne of grace; for there can be no communio with God, there can be nothing graciously given by Go to men, nothing done by men that can be accepted of God but at this throne of grace.

2. All should come to this throne, because all men hav need of the blessings dispensed at this throne of grace Where there is an universal urgent necessity, and only on place of supply discovered, men are called to betake themselves thither. The blessings dispensed at the throne o grace, are equally needed by all. Every man, every woman, young or old, rich or poor, are equally needy, because all are unspeakably needy of the mercy and grace of God. Some indeed have a greater sight and sense of their wants than others, (and that is mercy); but the real necessity is common to all. Every unpardoned man needs a pardon at this throne of grace; but few, if any, value a pardon till they get it, or value the grace of God till they feel it. Do you feel your need of what is given and got at this throne? Come then. The law thunders and roars against you, that you may see your need of coming hither for what the law cannot give, nor hinder you from receiving, nor rob you of when received. Do you think in your heart, that you are the most needy person in all the world; that you need all the grace and mercy, or more, than ever any sinner received? Then come the rather, come the sooner. The neediest soul, the hungriest sinner, the person most greedy of the grace of God, should come first to Christ's door, and beg loudest,

Is there any not needy? Alas! many think so, but none is so. Will you come for hunger and want? A sensible hunger, a sense and sight of need, an appetite after grace and mercy, is an alms that Christ can give; and many professors want it sadly.

3. The command is universal, to all that hear it. As the apostle saith, Rom. iii. 19. *These things saith the law to them that are under the law;* so I may say, This saith the gospel to all under the sound of it, *Come to the throne of grace.* It is no indifferent thing. God commands all men to come. Believing (that is, coming) is commanded, 1 John iii. 23. Are you afraid to come? *Have not I commanded you?* Josh. i. 9. as God spake to the Captain of Israel. Will men own God's authority in the law, and deny it in the gospel? Is he not the same God in both? He that commands you to have no other gods besides him, doth command you to believe on his Son Jesus, who is *the true God, and eternal life,* 1 John v. 20. If coming to the throne of grace were not commanded, not coming to it were no sin; and who dare say so? Not believing on Jesus Christ is the great gospel-sin, because believing on him is the great gospel-duty and work, John vi. 29.

Object. But I am afraid he commands not me; others he may command, but not such a vile dead creature as I am.

Ans. Are you worse than some he hath commanded? Jer. iii. 1, 4, 5. *Thou hast played the harlot with may lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord.* Such a practice in your land would greatly defile it, saith the Lord; but such acts of grace become the throne of grace. Are you worse than *poor,* and *blind,* and *miserable,* and *wretched,* and *naked?* Yet the king of this throne commands them to come to him, though he sweetly calls it *counsel,* Rev. iii. 17, 18. And in it we may join his two names, *Wonderful, Counsellor,* Isa. ix. 6.

Object. 2. But Christ calls and invites them that are *weary and heavy laden,* Matth. xi. 28. and the *thirsty,* Isa. lv. 1. and I am not such; and therefore he commands not me to come.

Ans. 1. Do you expect any grace but at this throne of grace? Think you to work it out in yourselves, and come to him for more? or to get the beginning somewhere else,

and then come to Christ for the rest? This bewrays your pride, and ignorance of the entire corruption of your nature, and of your impotency to any good. This frame discovers your ignorance of the nature of the grace of God, that consists in its freedom; as its glory is, in its being the original cause of all good done for us, and wrought in us, or by us.

Ans. 2. Christ never bid any man be or do any thing without him, and then come to him, and he would do more for him. Christ calls men as he finds them, and then makes them what he would have them: *He begins the good work in them, and performs it*, Phil. i. 6.

Ans. 3. These and many such like calls and invitations do not limit and restrain the universality of the gospel-command, but do graciously apply it to such cases wherein they that are, are apt to think that they are specially excepted. What is more common than such arguings of unbelief: I have a vast load of sin lying on me; I have spent my time, and strength, and money, on sin and vanity; I have been wearied in the greatness of my way of departing from the Lord, and therefore the Lord will not receive me? Therefore such are named particularly by the Lord, and specially called.

Therefore let no man, whatsoever he hath been, or is, think, that he is not commanded to come to this throne of grace. Take the command, lay it on your conscience, give obedience to it; take the command for your warrant, and never fear but you shall be welcome. Can your soul say, Lord, no man out of hell is more needy of thy saving grace than I, no sinner more unworthy of it than I; yet, because thou commandest me to come, I come to beg, and to receive? He will sweetly receive you: *Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out*, John vi. 37. A text that hath been an anchor-hold to many a sinking sinner.

4. All should come to the throne of grace, because of the universality, vast extent, and indefiniteness of the promise of welcome to all that come. The command of God is a warrant and ground for our obedience, and the promise is a ground for confidence. The promise is God's great mean

for working faith; faith is the impression God makes on the soul of a man by the promise. When God takes the promise of the gospel, and applies it with the power of his grace upon the soul, it leaves an abiding mark and signature; and that is faith. The promise comes as the promise of a faithful God, who cannot lye, of a great salvation, to a great sinner. When the sinner sees and feels the truth and goodness of this promise, he believes. This promise of God is to be preached to all that hear the gospel; or rather, this promise is the gospel; the Lord will make it effectual as he seeth good. The apostle Peter encouraged such men to come to the throne of grace, who, if ever any in the world should have been kept back, it should have been they; a crew of the bloody murderers of the Son of God. But the word preached by Peter takes hold of their souls, and they cry out, *What shall we do?* No wonder they said so, when the cry of Christ's blood was in their consciences. The apostle saith to them, Acts ii. 38. *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*, &c. Their sin was very great, peculiar to them only; none before or after them were guilty of this. The cry of innocent blood is a dreadful cry. But this was more than all the murders ever committed in the world. It was the murdering *the Son of God*, it was slaying *the Prince of life*; it was all that the devil and wicked world could do, to cut the throat of the gospel, and of all the elect of God: and this wicked act was done against Christ, because he taught that he was the Son of God, and that he came from the Father to be the Saviour of the world. Yet, saith the apostle to them, Repent, and be baptized in his name, for the remission of that sin; you that have been dipped in his blood, and so dreadfully guilty by the shedding of it, be baptized in his name, for the remission of that guilt, and of all others. This calling for repenting of their guilt of Christ's blood, was plainly a requiring of faith in him; not only that he was the Lord Christ they had slain in their unbelief, but that pardon, in the virtue of that blood, might be had by them, on their betaking themselves to him by faith. So did the same apostle preach to

the council, Acts v. 28, 31. when he and his brethren were charged by the high-priest, for *filling Jerusalem with the doctrine of Christ, and intending to bring his blood upon them: Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.* He directs them to look to Christ as the giver of repentance for, and of forgiveness of all their sins; not excluding, but by, ver. 30. plainly including the greatest of all their sins, their *slaying of Christ, and hanging him on a tree:* and this they did *with wicked hands,* Acts ii. 23. and with hearts as wicked as their hands. Yet thus did Peter preach Christ. So well did he remember his Lord's command, Luke xxiv. 47. *That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* His argument is, Acts ii. 39. *For the promise is to you, and to your children.* Had they not slain the heir, and foundation of all the promises? Had they not done as much as men could do, to forfeit all interest in the promise? Yes; but Peter still invites them to the throne of grace, by an interest yet in the promise. The promise of grace and salvation by Jesus Christ, is the rope and cord that God casts out to sinking sinners: it is equally in the offer of all in the gospel. It is true, that the Lord means and designs it to some particular persons; but that design is secret, and utterly unknown to all, till the promise itself be apprehended by faith, or finally rejected by unbelief. See Jer. xxxviii. 7—14. Ebed-melech let down a rope to draw Jeremiah out of the dungeon by. The cords could never have pulled him up, unless the prophet had put them under him, and unless his friend had drawn him up. He did so, and ventures on this mean of escape. He ventures on the strength of the cord, and on the trustiness of his friend. If either of them had failed him, he might have fallen down, and broke his neck; or stuck still in the mire, and starved in the pit. The case is so here. The promise of salvation is a great security; but it is so only to them that cast themselves on it, and trust to it. Whoever will trust God's promise in Christ, will find, that it is able to bear all their weight, if it were never so great. Therefore lay this warm promise to thy cold heart, and, by the Lord's

blessing, life and warmth will come in. Try the strength of the promise, by casting all thy burden on it; and it will never sink under thee, nor thou perish by its failing. Christians think, that the promises of God are a blessed charter, (and so indeed they are); but few mind the promises as God's tendered and offered security to men; whereby, as means, he works faith in his chosen; and, by the offer of them to all in the gospel, leaves unbelievers inexcusable. Sinners perish under the gospel, not because there is no cord of salvation cast out to them, but because they either love the pit they are in, or cannot trust God's faithful promise of salvation by Christ for their delivery.

So much of the first thing, the proving that all ought to come to the throne of grace, or to God in Christ sitting on it. God is not otherwise approachable; universal need of this throne, and of the blessings given at it; an universal call and command of God to come; an universal promise to all that do come; all prove that all men should come.

II. But though it be the duty of all to come, yet but few do come. We would therefore see who they be that will come to the throne of grace. Of such we have two words.

1. Such as are given of the Father to the Son; all they, and they only, will come to this throne of grace: *All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me*, saith Christ, John vi. 37. *Ye believe not; because ye are not of my sheep*, John x. 26. The high spring of all the effectual calling and coming of men to Christ is this; *They that are ordained to eternal life, believe*, and none but they. It would be very unfit, that the book of life should be opened to, and read by any preacher of the gospel. I think not that ever any apostle had it opened to them with respect to others, so that they should be able, when looking on the multitude they preached to, to say, These are appointed for eternal life, and these passed by. But they being happily in the dark as to this secret purpose of God, did offer salvation through Jesus Christ to all that heard them. So Paul, Acts xiii. 38, 39. *Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe, are justified from all things, from which ye could*

not be justified by the law of Moses. Having told them this good news, he, ver. 40, 41. warns them: *Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish.* After his repeated pains on them, it is said, ver. 48. *As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed.* It was a severe application of this word, that a very worthy divine made of it, that all the elect of God in this place were gathered in, by Paul's ministry in it, at this time. The grace of election is the spring of faith, 2 Thess. ii. 13. 1 Pet. i. 2. but this grace of election is not seen, but in the gift and light of faith.

2. All such, and only they, will come to the throne of grace, that are drawn by the Father: John vi. 44, 45. *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.* Observe here the two universals: *No man can come, unless drawn; Every man that is drawn, doth come.*

The first decries the power of nature, the latter advanceth the power of God's grace. The utter impotence of nature, and omnipotence of grace, in the business of man's salvation, are stumbling-blocks to all the ungodly, but are foundations in Christian doctrine. The one lays man in the dust, the other raiseth him on a new bottom of the grace of God. When God hath a mind to draw a sinner to Christ, and to make him a believer on him to salvation, he teacheth him secretly and by a strong hand; he whispers into his heart the excellency of the Saviour, and greatness of his salvation; so that surely the perishing sinner comes to Christ, and as surely is welcomed and saved by him.

III. But who shall be welcome? Surely all that come, shall be welcome; as the word every where witnesseth: and all that ever tried it, have found and testify it by their experience. For as the Son refused none that were given him of the Father in their eternal counsel, but took every one of them as his charge to redeem them; so all they, and only they, being drawn by the Father, and made willing to come to Christ, are

made welcome by him, John vi. 37. He knows his sheep, when wandering on the mountains, John x. 16, 27, 28. and accordingly receives them. When the Father drives home the lost sheep to their great Shepherd, Christ knows them before he opens the fold to them; and because he knows them, he lets them in, that they may find pasture, and feed on him and his grace to eternal life.

But there are some that are specially welcome to Christ, and speed well at this throne of grace. As,

1. They that come when they can do nothing else; they that come to the throne of grace as their last shift: *We know not what to do, but our eyes are upon thee*, said Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 12. Sincerest believing, and strongest believing, is acted, when a man hath no prop at all to lean upon, but God alone. Believing is called *fleeing: We have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us*, Heb. vi. 18. Now, who flees? Only he that can stand no longer, that is not able to deal with his adversary and danger, that hath no hope of prevailing by his strength, and therefore betakes himself to his heels. It is men's great sin to endeavour to seek that elsewhere, that only is to be found here, mercy and grace. But it is the greatest sin of all, to count all lost, as long as this throne stands, and the Lord calls men to come to it. Be deeply humbled, and covered with shame; yet come notwithstanding. Such is the corruption of our hearts, and the Lord seeth it well, that if sinners could find grace and mercy any where else, they would never come to the throne of grace for it. Christ is the last shift of a distressed sinner; yet, blessed be his name, he welcomes the comer. The woman, Mark v. 25,—35. tries many means ere she comes to Christ, yet sped well when she came at last.

2. They are welcome to the throne of grace that come oftest, and ask the greatest things. It is otherwise in addresses to friends, or great men on earth. You may be welcome to them, if you come now and then, and if you ask little things; but if you come daily, and ask great things, and grow in your suits, they will quickly be weary of you. But what saith the King on this throne of grace? John xvi. 24. *Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye*

shall receive, that your joy may be full. Had not they asked formerly great things? that he would *expound his word to them*, Matth. xiii. 36. that he would *teach them to pray*, Luke xi. 1. that he would *increase their faith*, Luke xvii. 5. But all this was as nothing to Christ; nothing in regard of the great things he had to give, and they stood in need of. This is a great word of Christ's, *Ask, and I will give, and ye shall receive;* ask still more, and ye shall receive more, even till your joy be full. The reason why our souls are so empty of joy, is because our mouths are empty of prayer. Christ's love-quarrels with his people are three. 1. That they do not ask great things, and often. 2. That they do not receive what he is so ready to give. Our narrow vessels cannot take in large floods from the fountain of living water. 3. That they do not praise for what they receive. It is his due, our duty, and our great mercy. Both prayer and praise widens the heart for receiving more of Christ's fulness.

3. They are specially welcome to the throne of grace that come to stay, resolving never to leave it; that not only come to it at a pinch and strait, but come to abide there. Our Lord teacheth several parables, to encourage and direct us in plying the throne of grace, Luke xi. 5,—13. and xviii. 1,—8. Jacob was a blessed man, and knew well the manner of this court, when he wrestled with the angel, Gen. xxxii. 24,—30.; and that angel was the King of the throne of grace, Hosea xii. 3, 4, 5. After a long night's wrestling, with weeping and supplications, saith the Lord, Genesis xxxii. 26. *Let me go, for the day breaketh*, Jacob answers, *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. I will*, or *I will not*, looks like ill manners in speaking to God. He saith not, How can I hold thee? If thou hast a mind to go, it is impossible that I can detain thee. Can a man hold God when he hath a mind to be gone? But Jacob knew his party, and perceived that he tried him, if he would part without a blessing. "Nay, saith Jacob, if thou ask my leave and consent "to part so, I will never give it. Let the day break, and "the next night come, the great Blesser, and lame halting "Jacob, shall never part, with Jacob's consent, without a "blessing." And he prevailed. He had got his father's

blessing, by the cunning of his mother, Gen. xxvii.; had it again ratified by his father, chap. xxviii. 3, 4.; he had the Lord's blessing, chap. xxviii. 12,—16.; he got it renewed again, on the Lord's calling him to return to Canaan, chap. xxxi. 3.: Yet he was in a new strait, and wanted a new blessing, and wrestled for it, and obtained it. Let all the seed of Jacob imitate his practice, and they shall share in his blessing, and be *fed with the heritage of Jacob their father*, as the word is, Isa. lviii. 14.

In pressing the exhortation in the text, I shall lay before you a few considerations.

1. Consider the greatness of this privilege, that there is a throne of grace erected for sinners, and revealed to them. This throne is only erected for sinners: it had never been but for sinners. A throne of grace supposeth, that there are guilty sinners to stand before it, and to get good by it. The greatness of this privilege is apparent, in comparing the state of fallen man with that of fallen angels; and in comparing their state that have the gospel, with theirs that are without it.

1*st*, Compare the state of fallen man with that of fallen angels. Whatsoever the proper meaning of that word is, Psalm viii. 5. *Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels*, these two may be well conceived; That man in his original make was lower in dignity than the angels; and that man was made a little after the angels were made: and long after it could not be; for the whole old creation was compleatly finished in six days. The angels that fell, are so sinful and miserable, that we cannot speak any good of them; yet, in their first make, they were a very glorious part of the creation. Notwithstanding, when they sinned, there was no throne of grace provided for them: *God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell*, 2 Peter ii. 4.; yet, for his elect, he *spared not his own Son*, Rom. viii. 32. The devils, (for such sin made them), immediately upon their sinning, were as much condemned as ever they shall be: I say not as much executed; for it seems that their full torment is reserved to the last day, Jude, ver. 6. 2 Peter ii. 4. *Art thou come to torment us before the time?* Matth. viii. 29.

say they to Christ. No wonder the devil be such an enemy to the gospel of man's salvation, and a hater of the throne of grace. The wonder is, that men should be deceived by Satan, to despise and slight this great privilege. Let Christians take a view of this astonishing appearance of God's grace, that fallen angels are all passed by, and fallen man taken up; not indeed all of them, but a great many, as one day will declare: Heb. ii. 16. *For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.*

2dly, Consider the greatness of this privilege in the revelation of it. You have it, but the greatest part of the world have it not. They that cannot receive the truth of God revealed in the word about the sovereignty of grace in election, and the efficacy of distinguishing grace in calling, must see the same sovereignty acted in dispensing or with-holding the means of grace as pleaseth him. And to be utterly ignorant that there is a throne of grace, renders people as miserable as if there was no throne of grace at all. They that never hear of Christ, must perish. It is an idle dream, that the efficacy of Christ's death may be applied, and profitable to the saving of adult persons that never heard of him. There is no salvation for men but by Jesus Christ; there is no knowing of it, or partaking of it, but by *the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation*, Eph. i. 13. Christ and his name go together: Acts iv. 12. *Neither is there salvation in any other;* (no Saviour but he): *for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.* No other way of getting good by him, but by hearing of his name, and believing on his name: *How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard?* Rom. x. 14. It is a wonderful mercy to hear of him; but woe to them that hear, and do not believe. None can believe without hearing, Rom. x. 17.; but alas! many hear, and believe not, Isa. liii. 1.

2. Consider the great advantages of this privilege, of having a throne of grace erected for us, and revealed to us. All blessings may be had here, by coming for them. If there was such a throne in this world, for silver, and gold, and health, and outward mercies, what strange crowding would there be to it? The blessings to be had here, are innumerable for mul-

titude; *all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus*, Eph. i. 3.; blessings invaluable for their worth, eternal in their duration, most free in their tenure, and all given in love. Every act of favour from the throne of grace, is more worth than all God's common mercies. *Lord, lift up upon us the light of thy countenance*, Psal. iv. 6, 7. that will put joy into the soul. Every thing given at the throne of grace, is a blessing of grace. Its very name should teach people how to come, and how to call what they get at it. If it be a throne of grace, we should come to it as empty, needy beggars; and when we receive any thing there, we should call and count it grace. Ask all saints on earth, and they will witness, that great and good things are to be had at the throne of grace. Try it yourselves, and you will find it is not in vain to beg here. Nay, the damned in hell do bear sad witness, that great are the blessings that are to be had at the throne of grace, which they feel and know by their woeful and eternal loss of them. The glorified in heaven know what a rich throne of grace this is. Only sinners on earth will not believe this, nor use this throne as they should.

3. Consider that this court and throne is of short continuance. It will not be kept up always. There is a limitation of the time of its lasting; as Heb. iv. 7. *He limiteth a certain day.* The day of the continuance of the throne of grace, is bounded and limited with four days; the day of a man's life, the gospel-day, the world's day, and the Spirit's day.

1*st*, The day of every man's life. This hath bounds set to it by God, Job xiv. 5. The throne of grace continues unto men no longer than they live. When men die, they go not to the throne of grace, but of glory and judgment. If we have sped well at the throne of grace, we shall be welcome to the throne of glory. The uncertainty and shortness of life, with the certainty of the expiring of all treaties betwixt God and us about salvation at the end of life, should make people careful to secure the main matter in God's time.

2*dly*, There is the gospel-day. This is also set and limited by the Lord. He hath determined how many offers you shall have of Christ; and when they come to an end, there will not be one more. And then the throne of grace is taken down as

to you. Luke xix. 42. *If you hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes!* saith our Lord to Jerusalem. This was the ending determining day to Jerusalem as a city, and to its inhabitants as a body. Though many particular persons had another day of grace; yet the slipping of that day hangs on that poor people and their posterity to this very day.

3dly, There is the world's day. And then the day of grace will end as to all: *When the bridegroom came, they that were ready, entered with him to the marriage, and the door was shut*, Matt. xxv. 10. There was no more grace to be dispensed to men; and we know not when that day will come. Miserable is their case, who shall see Christ coming in the clouds of heaven, before they have seen him by faith in the gospel; who hear the voice of the arch-angel, and the trump of God, before they have heard the quickening voice of the Son of God from the throne of grace; who have neglected calling on him in time, and begin out of time, Luke xiii. 25. *When the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.* Is it not just that they should be kept at the shut door, that would not enter at an open door in Christ's time, and when he called? When Christ comes, and hath shut the door, no man will be let in, knock as he will. Nor, while the throne of grace is patent, no man will be kept out, be what he will, that hath a mind to enter, and knocks for entrance.

4thly, There is the Spirit's day. Here is a great depth of God's sovereignty and wisdom, a great depth of his severity, an unaccountable and awful judgment; how the Spirit of God strives with men in the gospel, how near he comes to them sometimes, how close he besiegeth them, that they seem to be on the point of yielding, and are not far from the kingdom of God; and yet he draws back his hand, and leaves them. I believe, that many ungodly men, many reprobates, have been sometimes in their life nearer to heaven, (if such may be said to be near to heaven that never come there) than many an elect person was half an hour before his conversion: Gen. vi. 3. *My Spirit shall not always strive with man.* What kind of striving this was, and what became of them striven with,

we have, 1 Peter iii. 19, 20. Nothing will more bitterly aggravate the eternal misery of the damned, than the remembrance of this, that they had a day, and in that day grace offered to them, and that they did reject the offer. Men's carnal hearts are now full of cavils against the unsearchable methods and ways of God towards the sons of men; but the last day's judgment will determine and declare, that in the perdition of the ungodly, there was, and is, most pure and unspotted justice and righteousness; and, in the salvation of all the elect, pure, perfect, and predominant grace, that reigned in them, and over them, and through them, till it brought them to heaven.

Wherefore, seeing the having of a throne of grace is a privilege of so great importance, and of so uncertain continuance, there should be the greater care to make diligent and present improvement of it. Why should any man let this throne of grace stand empty? Will men provoke the Lord to say, In vain have I set up a throne of grace for sinners that come not at it?

Again, Consider the wrath that will follow on the neglect, and not improving of this great privilege. The sin is many ways committed, and the judgments of many sorts that are inflicted. But I leave this to the next occasion.

Except you, in your personal exercise and experience, do know what this throne of grace is, and what is got there; you may be Christians hereafter, but as yet you are none; unless you experience what this throne of grace is, by frequent repairing to it, and by frequent receiving good at it. That man or woman, whatever his or her name be in the world, or the church of Christ, that never found any need for, or use of, or benefit by this throne of grace, is surely a dead sinner. People may safely and surely judge of both the state and frame of their souls, by their business at the throne of grace. Never got any soul life, but by an act of grace and power from this throne. No soul can be kept in life, but by daily intercourse with it. It is as impossible that these bodies of ours should be maintained in life and strength without meat, and drink, and air; as it is for the soul of a believer to prosper without daily plying the throne of grace.

Let therefore the exhortation in the text be complied with, Come to this throne. Say therefore, Lord, I am invited to come to the throne of thy grace, and none have more need of that grace than I, and there is enough of grace there for me; and therefore I will come, and beg, and get, and abide, and bless the giver, and become happy by receiving.

SERMON III.

HEB. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

I HAVE spoke of the first thing that this text contains, That God in Jesus Christ, in the gospel, is on a throne of grace, inviting men to come to him. What this throne of grace is; why all should come; who they be that will come; and who will be specially welcome, you have heard. I was pressing this exhortation of coming to this throne. You see the Apostle, in delivering this, takes in himself with them he exhorts, *Let us come*. He had oft come before, and had been bountifully dealt with at this court. 1 Tim. i. 14. *And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant* towards him. This made him commend this throne so highly, and intreat others, and stir up himself, to frequent addresses to it. I did use three arguments to back this exhortation, and shall add a fourth.

1. The first was the greatness of the privilege, of having a throne of grace to come unto; a privilege denied to fallen angels, and the knowledge of it denied to the far greater part of mankind.

2. This throne of grace is a privilege full of rich advantages. All believers know somewhat of them. All their acceptance with God, all their access to God, all their communications from him, and fellowship with him, all their blessings in time, and their hopes for eternity, are all owing to this, that God is on a throne of grace.

3. This privilege is of uncertain duration, and short. The Lord the King is for ever; but the throne of grace is not for ever. It is but a time-dispensation; and limited unto certain seasons. The gospel-day is uncertain, our lifetime is uncertain, the world's day is uncertain, to us, though all determined by God. But above all, the Spirit's day is uncertain. How long he will strive, when he will forbear, who can tell? Some godly men have thought, that there are few (if any) that live under a powerful ministry, but, at some time of their life, the Spirit of God comes close to them; so that there is not only a witness given for the Lord in the offers of the gospel, but there is a further addition to that witness, by some special approaches of God's Spirit to their hearts. But whatever there be in that observation, this is undoubted, that where the Holy Ghost makes the strongest assaults on men, if he be resisted, and withdraws, the most prodigious hardness is left behind. Therefore, extraordinary, bold, hardened sinners, cruel persecutors, apostates, and mockers of godliness, are usually such as sometimes were under special conviction: not to speak of the sin against the Holy Ghost; which consists in some high rebellion against special workings of the Spirit of God on men's consciences under the gospel. This dreadful sin Satan perplexeth many believers with fears of it. But it is certain, that a disturbing fear of this guilt is a proof of a person's innocency as to it. For whosoever have fallen into this abyss of wickedness, are so far from fearing the sin, (though they may have a hopeless fear of wrath, Heb. x. 27.) that they glory in it; therefore they are said to *do despite to the Spirit of grace.* Let all that find the Spirit striving with them, take good heed to themselves, comply with his motions, and secure their state speedily, by believing on the Lord Jesus; for the season of his striving is the most critical part of our life, and, as it issues, of greatest consequence to salvation or damnation.

4. A fourth argument I would conclude this point with, is, the greatness of the sin of not coming to the throne of grace, and the dreadful wrath it draws on. This sin is many ways committed, and many ways avenged. A little of both.

First, It is committed, 1. By men's despising and contemn-

ing the throne of grace; *making light of it*, Matth. xxii. 5. *neglecting so great salvation*, Heb. ii. 3. There are many things from whence this contempt springs. Either no sense of their need of what is to be had at the throne of grace; or else a dream, that they may be supplied elsewhere; or gross unbelief, that men think in their hearts, that all this account of the throne of grace is but a cunningly-devised fable; or the nature of the blessings, spiritual and eternal, unsuitable to, and not taking with their carnal hearts, who mind earthly things. If the exhortation had run thus, Let us come, that we may get silver, and obtain gold, to render us rich in this world; what leaping and striving would there be to obey it? whilst grace and mercy, that men have no sense nor experience of, are despised; and therefore the throne of grace, where only they are to be had, is despised also. The Spirit of God in the scripture is at much pains to commend the worth and value of the blessings that Christ came to purchase, and hath to dispense, and to prefer them above all present sensible things; yet, notwithstanding all the bright light of the word darting daily in men's eyes, the dross and dung of this world is more precious in the eyes, and savoury to the heart of every ungodly man, than all the grace given on earth, and all the glory to be given in heaven.

2. This sin of not coming, is committed by delaying to come. The call of God is, *Let us come*; the answer of many hearts is, *Let us delay to come*. Whence think you that these delays come? We have it daily to bewail before God and you, that a multitude will come together to hear, and do so day by day; yet all that can be said to them, from their childhood to their old age, never prevailed with many of them to spend one hour in serious treating at the throne of grace, with God in Christ, for the eternal salvation of their souls. It is undeniable, that ye are but a pack of gross hypocrites, if you attend on the means of grace in the assemblies of saints, and yet have no particular personal errand to the throne of grace for your own souls. The salvation of the soul is not carried on in a crowd. The grace of God must be particularly applied to you, and you must particularly apply it to yourselves, and yourselves to the throne of grace, if ever you be saved. The fellowship of

saints was never ordained for this end, to render personal applications to God needless; and it is grossly abused when it is so perverted. It is impossible, that a person can have any true fellowship with saints in any ordinance of God, unless he hath particular business at the throne of grace for himself. He hath indeed no true religion, whose all of religion is in company and in public. Yet we see how backward many professors are to this personal treating with God; how many shifts and delays they make. To such I say, Would it not be a terror to you, if either God, or man, or angels, or the devil, should tell you this day, that, from this time to your dying day, you shall never have leisure, nor heart, nor time, to spend one quarter of an hour in dealing with God for your eternal salvation! Would not this be terrible to you! But the same dreadful thing is daily done by men's delays. The call of God is to-day, you say to-morrow; when to-morrow comes, then you say next day; when that comes, you put it still farther off. This you may be sure of, that whatever is the true spring and cause of delays in this matter, will still remain and gather strength, unless the grace of God come in. Men deceive themselves with vain pretences: but the true spring of all delays in treating in earnest with God at the throne of grace, is unbelief and unwillingness; and the more they are indulged by delaying, the stronger they grow. *Therefore the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts*, Heb. iii. 7, 8. See how the Spirit of God fixeth an opposition betwixt these two, *present hearing*, and *present hardening*; and a conjunction betwixt these two, *present not hearing*, and *hardening*. If there is present hearing, there is no present hardening; if not, there is. The refusal given to the to-day's call of God, hardens the heart against to-morrow's call. O, that men dreaded delays as most perilous things, and the cause of the everlasting ruin of multitudes under the gospel!

3. Another way wherein this sin of not coming to the throne of God's grace is acted, is in refusing to come. All do not so grossly, but some do. There are two sorts of refusers; the secure, and the discouraged. There is a woeful plague of secure despair; a strange plague, but a certain one. Some people find things are bad with them as to their souls, sins many,

corruptions strong; they have made some essays to get matters mended, and all in vain: whereon they conclude, that it will never be better; and they sit down in security, and give themselves up to their pleasures: Isa. xxii. 13. *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die.* A strange argument. Approach of death usually mars the taste of pleasure. The handwriting on the wall, even when not known, marred Belshazzar's cheer, Dan. v. This is a very miserable and sinful case. It springs from men's being ignorant of the true remedy, when they were sick of sin; and because all the physic and physicians they used and tried did them no good, they conclude their sickness is unto death. But let such know, that *there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.* Only come and see, and try what may be done. Beware of despair; it is the devil's sin. But he hath reason for it: for he is condemned; and all doors of hope are eternally shut upon him, or rather none was ever opened to him. But for a man that hath *the riches of God's long-suffering, forbearance, and patience,* (Rom. ii. 4.), daily laid out upon him; that hath the door of grace set open to him, and the Lord calling, intreating, promising acceptance on his coming; for such a man to give over all hope, is a sin someway worse than the devils; a frame pleasing only to the devil, most dishonourable to God, and his Son Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Ghost, (I do not call it the sin against the Holy Ghost); a reflection on all the glorious appearances and manifestations of the throne of grace, and most surely damning if continued in. Away with it speedily: conclude thy case is not desperate; and if you cannot shake it off, come to the throne of grace, and complain of it. If ye can but see the throne, and him that sits upon it, despair will vanish as a night-owl on the bright shining of the Sun of Righteousness. Despair cannot live in the presence of the glorious grace of Jesus Christ. Come then and see, and lay hold on the hope set before you. The other refusers to come, are the discouraged. They do not despair that their case cannot be mended; but they see so much, and so many things out of order, that their hearts fail them in applying to the only remedy. In the time of their carnal security, and ignorance of God and of themselves, (that bred and kept up that security), they could rush into God's

presence without fear, and call and count all the blessings of the covenant theirs, without any doubt, and yet without any ground. But when God began to deal with them, and to come close to them, and to send in light and life into their consciences, then they see their former mistakes; they see their utter want and great need of those blessings they once dreamed they were rich in the possession of; they see their utter unworthiness of them; and therefore find it hard to believe, that ever the Lord will welcome them to the throne of his grace. Usually beginners in Christianity have greater light and sense as to their necessity of saving grace and mercy, than about the Lord's willingness to give them. And this is the season wherein Satan doth usually come in (if permitted, and often he is) with his temptations and fiery darts, that they felt nothing of while they were in his kingdom and power of darkness. To such I would propose three things:

1*st*, What is the ground of thy discouragement? Hereto I know they will say a great deal, and it may be more than is true. I grant all can be said to be true. But the sum of all is, I am a great sinner, and exceeding miserable. Be humbled as low as hell in the sense thereof, yet be not discouraged. What is in thy case but what is common? Only thou seest and feelest for thyself, and so did others.

2*dly*, What is the tendency of it? Doth it tend to keep thee aloof from the throne of grace? It is then, of Satan.

3*dly*, What can be the cure of it? You would not be always in this heartless frame. How think you to get it removed? by keeping still from the throne of grace? Will, or can, any spiritual plagues be cured, but by Christ the Physician? or any spiritual blessing be got, but at his door? Can you expect it without coming, and begging? David took the right course with his fainting heart, Psal. xlii. 5.; he challengeth his soul for its disquietment; he chargeth it to trust in God: and because he had not prevailed with his soul, he brings it to God by faith, ver. 6. *O my God, my soul is cast down within me.* Do ye so; and call upon him by that name, *God that comforteth those that are cast down*, 2 Cor. vii. 6.

I shall name no more of the ways this sin is acted than

these three; despising, delaying, and refusing. Several other expressions there are of this sin in the word; but if you be kept from these three, you are *innocent from the great transgression.*

Secondly, What is the wrath revealed from heaven for this great sin of not coming to the throne of grace?

1. God testifies his displeasure against this sin, by taking away of his gospel. Nothing is more just with God, than that, when his grace is slighted, the means of grace should be removed. If the Lord argue so as to correction, Isa. i. 5. *Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more;* much more may he argue thus, Why should I keep up a throne of grace any longer? you will but despise it more and more. Christ teacheth a sad parable, Matth. xxi. 33, &c. and makes a just, but dreadful application of it to the hearers, ver. 43. *Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God* (another name of the throne of grace) *shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.* They were *cut off for their unbelief*, Rom. xi. 20. With what face can an unbeliever beg of God the continuance of the means of grace, who hath no mind to enjoy the end and blessing of those means? A general contempt of the grace of God enfeebleth the spirits of ministers and Christians in standing before the Lord, for the continuance of the gospel with a people that use it not. This dreadful judgment hath been often threatened in the word, and inflicted, in the severe providence of God, on many once-famous churches and nations. As the Lord saith, *But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of my people Israel*, Jer. vii. 12.; so I may say, Go to Jerusalem, and the seven churches in Asia; go to Greece and Africa, where many a famous church was planted, and learn to fear for yourselves: not to speak of later desolations in ours and our fathers days. The Lord's removing of his gospel, is a judgment that is very deep; as the apostle speaks of the same subject, Rom. xi. 33. We may take notice of this judgment as brought on by prevailing errors in and about the foundation, Jesus Christ; or by gradual apostasy, and impurity of conversation,

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he Lord visits for this sin with spiritual judgments, most wrathful dispensations of God on this side hell; hardness of heart, blindness of mind, searedness of conscience, vileness of affections; judgments which they that are under, never feel, nor complain of, nor will be convinced of, though they are sometimes visible to others. If the Lord inflict them on the Heathen for their abuse of the dim light of nature, Rom. i. 21, 24, 26, 28. how much greater are such that are sent for the abuse of the light of the gospel? That dreadful commission given to the most eminent prophet, Isa. vi. 9, 10. is often applied and fulfilled in the New Testament: Matth. xiii. 14. and John xii. 39, 40. *Therefore they could not believe*, (their sin was, ver. 37. *they believed not on him;* here is their plague, *they could not believe*), *because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them.* Paul applies it to some of his unbelieving hearers, with a strange preface, *Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias, to our fathers, saying*, Acts xxviii. 25, 26. The interest and influence of God in such spiritual judgments, is a great depth. They are always just, and always deep; and dreadful are their effects. They on whom they fall, feel nothing, see

nothing, fear nothing. So that truly we may say, as Psalm lxviii. 35. *O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places.* But such as have a heart to the grace of God, and would fain be blessed thereby, need not fear those judgments, and shall never feel them.

4. *Lastly,* The wrath of God against such as come not to the throne of grace, is engraven in the singular vengeance of eternal ruin. There is something singular in their hell. The law sends all unpardoned sinners to a law-hell: the Lord sends despisers of saving grace to a special hell, Heb. ii. 3. and x. 29. a *much sorer punishment.* No quarters in hell are tolerable: yet our Lord saith, Matth. xi. 22, 24. *That it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah, than for the cities where he preached, and wrought mighty works.* We should be thankful for this fair warning. I am afraid that there are very few that do truly believe this, That the condition of a sinner under the gospel, that is of a blameless conversation, and makes a fair profession; only he is an unbeliever in Jesus Christ, and one that hath no business at the throne of grace, he hath no other fault but that, (and he needs no more to ruin him); that this man's case is worse now, and will be worse at the last day, than that of the inhabitants of Sodom, on whom the Lord rained down hell from heaven. Many of our gay professors, and civil moral men, would think themselves highly affronted and undervalued, to be put in the balance with filthy Sodomites. If it were possible that thou had no fault but only unbelief, thy sin is greater, thy judgment will be more dreadful, thy state worse for eternity, than that of the vilest of the nations to whom the throne of grace was never revealed; John xv. 22. *If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.* And to the same purpose our Lord spake to them, ver. 24. They were sinners before; but the contempt of that dispensation of grace that Christ brought to them, rendered them singular transgressors. So John iii. 17. *God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.* Are then all saved, and none condemned? No: Of the world that hear of God's Son, some *believe on him,* and they are *not condemned,* but *saved;*

and others *believe not on him*, and therefore are *condemned*, ver. 18. What is the condemnation? *Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil*, ver. 19. The law condemns them, because their deeds are evil; the despised gospel condemns them, because they refuse the only remedy. Law-sin is poison to the soul, and kills as such. Unbelief is rejecting the only antidote, and kills as such. Look to one scripture more: Luke xix. 27. *But those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.* It is not usual for kings and princes to have criminals executed in their presence, but command it to be done by mean hands, in some remoter place. But Christ will have his enemies slain before him. To be slain in Christ's presence, is double destruction: 2 Thess. i. 9. *Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction*, (ever a-destroying, never destroyed; the destroyer punisheth eternally, and the destroyed suffer eternally) *from the presence of the Lord.* The meaning is not only, that a great part of this punishment stands in being deprived for eternity of the gracious presence of Jesus Christ; as in Matth. xxv. 41. The first and saddest word in the last sentence is, *Depart from me.* Just; for they said to him, *Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*, Job xxi. 14. Let all trembling believers and lovers of Christ persuade themselves, that they shall never hear it pronounced against them. All that make it their business to come to Christ, that make it their daily suit that he would come to them, shall not hear, *Depart from me;* but, *Come to me, ye blessed.* Ye often came for a blessing, and got many by coming; now come to receive the blessing of the kingdom. But this word, *from the presence of the Lord*, saith further, that this destruction flows from Christ's angry and glorious presence; and that it shall also be in his presence; as Rev. xiv. 10. It is *in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb*, they are *tormented for ever.*

Thus having opened the first head in the text, That there is a throne of grace erected and revealed, in the gospel, to which men are invited to come; I shall only apply it in two questions, and the Lord apply them to your consciences, and

make them give a right and true answer. They are two short plain ones. 1. *Have you come?* 2. *Will ye come?*

Quest. 1. *Have you come to the throne of grace?* Do you know and are sure that you have come? as Peter said, John vi. 68, 69. The apostle speaks of such comers, Hebrews xii. 24. *But ye are come to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.* You are all hearers of the throne of grace; many are talkers of it, and some disputers and contenders about this throne: but are you comers to it? is your heart on it, your business at it, and your daily exercise about it? You are in the outward court; doth that satisfy you? Alas! many poor souls die and perish there. To help to some conviction how it is with you as to this, I would ask,

1. Have you come to the throne of grace? Then you *have seen the King.* He is a poor sorry courtier, that goes to court every day, and never seeth the King's face; as Absalom, 2 Sam. xiv. 24, 28. Alas! many live in Jerusalem all their days, and never see the King that dwells in Zion. When Paul was brought to the throne of grace, Christ was revealed in him and to him, Gal. i. 15, 16. When men are brought and come to the throne of grace, they receive *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ,* 2 Cor. iv. 6. There is a *seeing of him,* joined with *believing on him,* John vi. 40. All that see Jesus Christ, must have eyes from him to see him with; *the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him, that enlightens the eyes of men's understandings,* Eph. i. 17, 18. His *eye-salve* can only make blind sinners to see, Rev. iii. 18. Are men in doubt whether they have seen Christ or not? Whence doth it proceed? Is Christ so mean, and dark, and ordinary an object, that men may see him, and not know that they see him? A man may doubt whether his eyes take up a dim cloudy star in a dark night: but the sun doth not shine, or the man is blind, if he lift up his face, and doubt whether he see the sun at noon-day. There is a manifestation of Christ promised, John xiv. 21, 23. which, when made by him, and perceived by his people, removeth all doubtings; so that the

soul must say, as Isa. xxv. 9. *This is our God, this is the Lord.* But this measure is not ordinary, nor constantly to be expected. Is there any like unto Jesus Christ? Are any of *his companions*, as they are called, Song i. 7. so like to him, that a believer cannot discern the difference? Never did a man see Jesus Christ by the eye of faith, but he is, by that sight of him, persuaded that there is none to be compared with him. No man is converted, and made a believer, but by a revelation of Jesus Christ. A man may be awakened with a view of God's glory; he may be alarmed by a sight of sin and hell; and may be roused out of his sleep of security, by the thunders of Sinai: but he is never converted, and made a Christian, but by a revelation of Jesus Christ, as glorious in his robes of salvation. Whence then is it that all believers on him do not own his manifesting himself to them, and their seeing of him? It is in part from the weakness of their sight, the greatness of the glory of him they see, and their strong desire to see him better. But for such as have spent their days about the throne of grace, and yet never saw Jesus Christ, and the glory of God in his face as a Saviour, so as to disgrace all things in comparison with him, so as to raise desires after more of him, and so as to fill their hearts with love, wonder, and praise; such have been at the court, but have not seen the King on his throne.

2. Are you come to the throne of grace? What made you come? what errand did you come upon? No man comes without an errand. We need not make and seek one; we have enow at hand, if we would but use them. What wants felt you at home? and what of his fulness was taking with you? Can you say, I have a naked filthy soul, and I am ashamed to look on it; but how well would the robe of his righteousness fit and adorn it? I am empty of all good, and he is full of all grace, on purpose to fill perishing souls, and I come for a share thereof. The blessing of many ready to perish hath come upon him; and I came for his rich salvation, and would leave my poor, but eternal blessing on him. They that have no particular pressing business about their soul's salvation, may talk of the throne of grace, but do not indeed come to it.

3. What got ye? If you come indeed you receive, if you receive not, you come not. Say not, you have received nothing, because you have not got all you would have. It is necessary, that such as come, get somewhat; but it is not fit that they should receive all that they want. A life of faith must be lived, and dependence and begging still kept on foot. But somewhat is still given and got, though the gift be not always seen and owned. But tell me, Christians indeed, have you not sometimes got that at the throne of grace, that ye would not take a world for? Did you ever apply to this throne in earnest, and found it in vain? Have you not sometimes got a glance of Christ through the lattice Song ii. 9. that hath made you forget your poverty, and remember your misery no more? Know ye not what it is to have a smile of his countenance, and a token that you have found favour in his eyes? Have you not got at this throne a word of promise, that hath fed and feasted thy faith. Jer. xv. 16. *Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart; for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.* Have you not sometimes got the door of faith opened, and the eye of faith sharpened, that ye could see within the vail, and behold the good land, and the blessed Lord of it, and thy happy interest in both? Let not this throne be disparaged both by the true emptiness of hypocrites that are about it rather than at it, and by the peevishness of real believers. There are no poor courtiers at this court; they are all *rich* Rev. ii. 9. They are only *poor in spirit;* but not so poor as they think; for a *kingdom is theirs*, that is better than all kingdoms under heaven, Matth. v. 3. The world counts believers poor, because they see they often have not outward riches; and they are blind, and cannot see their spiritual riches in possession and reversion. The believer thinks himself poor, because he seeth not all he hath in possession 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23.; and because he would so fain have all he hath a right to, Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14. and the hope of; or because his charters are hid, or his eyes are dim, that he cannot read them.

Quest. 2. *Will ye come?* All is ready; come to this throne

Matth. xxii. 4. If ye have never come, begin just now; if ye have come often, come oftener, and come better, come nearer and closer still. Is there any thing wanting in you? Come; for all supply is here. Are you guilty? Come for pardon. Many drawn pardons are at this court, drawn up sweetly by free grace, sealed with the blood of Jesus. Come to this throne, and add your seal of faith to one for yourself; and it shall be a charter for glory to you, lying warm at your heart, as long as you live, and will be your passport at death. But because the following words of the apostle in this verse contain arguments for coming, I say the less now.

So much for the first head of doctrine in the text.

HEAD II. The second head is, *How we should come to this throne of grace? Come boldly*, saith the Holy Ghost, by Paul's pen.

The point I would speak to from it, is this:

DOCT. *That there is a boldness in men's approaching to the throne of grace, that is allowed and commanded.*

For the apostle doth not only mention it as a privilege allowed, but as a duty or frame enjoined and commanded. So that he that comes not with this boldness, not only sits down short of his allowance, but sins in disobeying a plain command. The privilege is spoke of in Eph. iii. 12. *In whom* (our Lord Jesus Christ, as ver. 11.) *we have boldness and access with confidence, by the faith of him.* In Heb. x. 19, 22. both the privilege is asserted, and the improvement of it commanded, in *drawing near with full assurance of faith*, and that to the holiest of all.

On this point I would shew,

I. What this boldness is that is allowed in approaching to the throne of grace.

II. What are the grounds of this boldness.

I. *What is the boldness allowed in coming to the throne of grace?*

There is a boldness that is not allowed, and that I would warn you of.

their hearts may be too much set upon. It is about such that believers should watch against this presumptuous boldness. But if the pleading at the throne of grace be about salvation and spiritual blessings, the difference betwixt faith and presumption appears in this: Presumption can never plead with God, neither in deep distress, nor in the view of sin; but it is the excellent property of faith, that it can plead with God in both cases: Psal. lxv. 3. *Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away:* Spoken like a believer; and Psal. cxxx. 3, 4. *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* (But can David stand? Yes, and he stands on this ground); *but there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared.* There is just cause to suspect, that there is presumption in that man's heart, when his boldness is only kept up, when sin is out of sight, and disappears. A believer believes most humbly, and often most strongly, when his sinfulness and unworthiness is best seen: for true boldness of faith is not supported by any good or worth in us, but by what is in Christ. The boldness of faith cannot be entertained with *regarding of iniquity in the heart,* Psal. lxvi. 18. 1 John iii. 20.; yet it can, with the being and seeing of iniquity in both heart and life, Rom. vii. 24, 25. 1 Tim. i. 15. But of this farther from the next head, of the boldness of faith. I now touch it only as it differs from the presumptuous boldness that is allowed to none. Again, faith can stand under that distress that breaks the back of presumption; Job xiii. 15, 16. *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; but I will maintain mine own ways before him. He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him.* "He hath taken away "my children all at once, my estate in one day; hath taken "away my health, and made me miserable, to a proverb in all "ages: although he should proceed, and slay me with his own "hand, my slayer is my Saviour, my death shall be my salva-"tion." Great words, and hard to be spoken in the day of heavy trial! God slaying Job, is Job's salvation. God slays, Job trusts, and maintains his confidence under the stroke. No hypocrite can do this; and many believers do but bungle at the doing of it. There is an extremity a-coming on every man, that will try and discover what metal there is in his faith; prepare for it.

What then is the boldness allowed in coming to the throne of grace? It must not be an ignorant, peremptory boldness. What must it then be?

Ans. It is only the *boldness of faith*, Eph. iii. 12. Heb. x. 19. The boldness of faith hath this in general in it, that it is grounded and bottomed on somewhat without a man, and on nothing in him. It is grounded on Jesus Christ, as we shall hear farther. It is a great mistake in Christians to think, that they cannot come to the throne of grace with boldness, because of the many infirmities in their hearts, and in their addresses. Your complaint may be just and true; but the inference is not good. Do you never, in your counting your infirmities, put in this great one amongst them in your confessions, the want of boldness of faith? for this boldness stands not in any thing in us, and done by us. We must not come boldly, because we can pray well, and plead hard; we must not think to be heard in heaven, neither because of our much speaking, nor well speaking, Matth. vi. 7. as the Pharisees did. The boldness of faith hath a higher, and more noble and firm foundation, even Jesus Christ.

I shall conclude this discourse with these three acts of this allowed and commanded boldness of faith.

1. Believe firmly that the throne of grace is erected for poor, empty, sinful creatures, just such as you be. As Paul saith of the law, 1 Tim. i. 9. *It is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient;* so may we say of the throne of grace, It is not made, framed, and revealed for the holy and happy, but for miserable creatures that want mercy, and sinful helpless creatures that want grace. By what is dispensed here, we may know for whom, and for what sort of folks, it was designed and erected.

2. Believe firmly, that coming to the throne of grace by you is allowed and commanded by the Lord. Say confidently, While I am coming to the throne of grace for mercy and grace, I am in the work that the Lord would have me to be in. Take in all discoveries you have made unto you, or that you can find out by searching, of the weakness and infirmities that are in your way of addressing to it; own them humbly; but maintain this stedfastly, that though you cannot do as

SERMON IV.

HEB. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

IT is one of the names given to the godly in the word, that they are *the generation of them that seek the Lord, that seek his face*, Psal. xxiv. 6. And they must be bold and arrogant pretenders to this name, that are guilty of the utter neglect of this duty. Since it is a duty of so great importance, it is needful to know how to manage it aright. This verse gives us a great directory, how to perform in a right manner this great duty. 1. It tells us whither to come: To a *throne of grace*. 2. How we should come: *With boldness*. Addresses to God may many ways miscarry; if not made to the true God, God in Christ; if not in the right manner. We have here one thing about the right manner, *coming with boldness*.

On this I proposed two things to be handled.

1. What is the nature of this allowed boldness?

2. What grounds are for it?

On the nature of this boldness, I began to speak last day; and did mainly insist on the negative.

Now it follows to speak of the positive. It is the boldness of faith that is allowed and commanded here, Eph. iii. 12. Faith is a marvellous grace, both in its original, in its foundation, and in its actings and exercise. It is the meanest and lowest of all graces. Every grace brings somewhat considerable. Love brings a flaming heart, repentance brings a bleeding heart, obedience brings a working hand, patience brings a broad back for the smiter; but faith brings only an empty heart and hand, to be filled with borrowed and gifted blessings. And yet faith is the highest and loftiest grace; it cannot rest till it be in at the heart and love of God in Christ. Faith (if I may so speak) can both be in heaven and hell at the same time. The believer looking on himself as in himself, (the apostle's distinction, 2 Cor. iii. 5. *ourselves*,

as of ourselves), judgeth himself to the pit of hell, as his deserved lot; but when he looks on himself as in Christ, he sits high. Eph. ii. 5, 6. and *makes bold to enter into the holiest of all*, Heb. x. 19. How many contrary sentiments of himself doth a believer express! only salved from being contradictions, by this distinction, That the word reveals and faith improves. *I know that in me dwells no good thing*, Rom. vii. 18. How! no good thing in a man full of the HolyGhost! a man rich in the grace of Christ! a man that had *laboured more abundantly than all the twelve apostles!* 1 Cor. xv. 10. *Yea*, saith he, *in me, that is, in my flesh dwells no good thing*. A believer as in himself, and a believer as in Christ, are in a manner two different, distinct, contrary persons. A believer as in Christ, is a new creature; as in himself, and the remainders of corruption in him, is an old man still, or rather, hath much of the old man in him. A Christian hath two different opposite I's in him; as the apostle elegantly and deeply discourseth, Rom. vii. 19,—25. This genius of faith is much to be heeded in its bold addresses to the throne of grace.

This boldness of faith in this court of grace, acts in four.

1. In a free access at all times, and in all cases. It is a privilege allowed by the Lord to his people, and embraced and improved by their faith. There is no forbidden time, in which we may not come. No such command as in that King's court, Esther iv. 11. Here it is proclaimed, Psalm lxii. 8. *Trust in him at all times*. Phil. iv. 6. *Be careful for nothing: but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.* There cannot be a more large and comprehensive account of the matter of allowed addresses to the throne of grace, than this. The apostle prescribes prayer as a cure of perplexing care. He hints, that every thing that is, or may be the matter of care, may lawfully be made the matter of holy prayer. Turn your care into prayer; and the care will evaporate and vanish, and your cure will be felt. Blessed be the Lord, that hath made this good in the experience of many who have gone before him, with hearts filled and oppressed with many cares, and have returned light and free, and their *countenance no more sad;* as Hannah, 1 Sam. i. 18.

2. The boldness of faith acts in free speaking of all the mind to God. This the Greek word in the text particularly points at. Let us come with boldness, *free speaking of all our mind; pouring out the heart to him*, Psalm lxii. 8. *I poured out my complaint before him: I shewed before him my trouble*, Psal. cxlii. 2. The tongue is not to be tied at this throne; but all that is on the heart, is to be told to him. He knows it before we tell it, and better than we do; but it is his will, that we should make all our minds known to him. A believer, the better case his faith is in, he is the more open and free in dealing with God.

It is recorded of a man, that we should hardly have counted a believer, had not the Holy Ghost numbered him amongst them, in Heb. xi. 32. that *he uttered all his words* (or matters) *before the Lord in Mizpeh*, Judg. xi. 11. So Samuel did, 1 Sam. viii. 21. *And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord.* It is a great favour that the Lord allows us so to do. This is not after the manner of men. It would be counted a troublesome impertinence, to vent all our thoughts, and cases, and concerns, to a creature; but we may do so to the Lord. When David refrained his speech, and kept silence, it went badly with him, Psal. xxxii. 3.

3. This boldness of faith acts, and should act, in familiarity with God. Believers should come to the throne of grace, not as *strangers and foreigners, but as fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*, Eph. ii. 19. Our Lord, in his directing us to pray, bids us begin with, *Our Father, which art in heaven.* The Spirit of adoption helps to cry, *Abba, Father*, Rom. viii. 15. Gal. iv. 6. When faith speaks rightly this word, and fixeth on it, all other desires will sweetly follow. *Abba* and *Amen*, uttered in faith, are the might of prayer. Strangers know not what familiarity the Lord expresseth to his people, nor how much familiarity he allows them to use with him. It was a great word of a great saint many years ago in this land, when dying in a bright shining of the Sun of Righteousness on his soul, "Tell it to the people, preach it at my funeral, That "God dealeth familiarly with men."

4. This boldness of faith acts in importunity at the throne of grace. This importunity is nothing but the stiffness and tenaciousness of faith. Faith sometimes (and then it is best) will neither be beat back by delays from God, nor by inward challenges; but when it hath got hold of God, it will keep its hold. Our Lord spoke several parables to direct and encourage to this importunity: Luke xviii. 1,—8. that of the unjust judge and oppressed widow; and Luke xi. 5,—8. We must understand parables warily. No importunity did ever, or can ever prevail with God, to do that for us, or give that to us, that he hath no mind to do or give. All he doth and gives, is in love. Yet he puts his people on importunity in asking, as if he were unwilling to give; when indeed it is that they may be more fit to receive, and that he may give the more. Thus Christ tried the woman of Canaan, Matth. xv. 22,—28.

So much for the first thing, What is the boldness of faith allowed and commmanded in approaches to the throne of grace?

II. *What grounds are there for this boldness?*

There is need of great and solid ones to bear up this frame. And, blessed be God, we have such.

1. The gracious discovery made to us of God in Christ. This is, as it were, the essence of the throne of grace. The Father's name declared by the Son, John xvii. 25, 26. It is utterly impossible that there can be any lawful boldness in approaching unto God, unless we know this name, and take up this discovery of God. Many professors busy their minds and heads with general notions and names of God; as that he is *gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity.* All good names of God. But is he not *just, and a hater of iniquity; holy, and of purer eyes than that he can behold it?* But the main inquiry is little thought on, Where shall we find the benefit of all the comfortable names of God, and escape the harm of his awful names? It is all in this blessed name, *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,* Eph. iii. 14. If you approach to God out of Christ, you run into a consuming fire. Here is the ground of the believer's

boldness: The God he seeks, and before whom he comes, is revealed to us as Christ's Father, and ours in him; John xx. 17. *Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.* Blessed be the words, and the speaker of them? and happy is the believer of them. Faith cannot stand strong without the remembrance of them. They are *my brethren*, for all their fainting, and forsaking of me: I count and call them such, though I be entered in part into my glory. Tell them whither I am going, and where they are henceforth to seek me; and how to call on and worship the Father, as *mine* and *theirs*, and *theirs* because *mine*.

2. Another ground of boldness, is the mediation of Jesus Christ. But this being the third thing in the text, I leave it to its proper place.

3. The intercession of the Holy Ghost in his people, is a great ground of boldness. They have not only Christ making intercession for them at the right hand of God; but they have the *Spirit himself making intercession in them, and for them*, Rom. viii. 26, 27. A special scripture; that I would remark five things from, relating to this purpose. 1. Who is the assister of believers in prayer? *The Spirit itself;* as also he is called as to his witnessing, ver. 16. And the word points at the immediateness of his assistance. 2. What this assistance is applied to? *Our infirmities;* infirmities in ourselves, and in our prayers; as the apostle declares, *We know not what we should pray for as we ought.* The communion of the Holy Ghost is only with believers, for he dwells in them only; and his communion with them is only with his own new creation in them; and because this, as in them, labours with infirmities, his care is about them also. 3. The way of his helping, is in the original hinted: *He helpeth with us*, or *over-against us*, as a powerful assistant to the weak, in bearing a heavy burden; as Col. i. 29. *Whereunto I labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.* It is in vain to expect the Spirit's assistance in work we neglect, or against infirmities we indulge and comply with. 4. What this assistance is? *Making intercession for us*, ver. 26, 27. and that *according to the will of God.* How can a believer but prevail, who hath the blood

of the High Priest speaking in heaven, Heb. xii. 24. and the Spirit of Christ crying in his heart on earth, Gal. iv. 6.? The voice of the Spirit is the best thing in our prayer; it is that God hears and regards. 5. But, *lastly*, How doth this assistance and intercession work in us? *With groanings which cannot be uttered.* What! only *with groanings?* We would think it should be, that he assists with piercing cries that might reach heaven, with strong arguments that cannot but prevail, with mighty force and power that cannot be resisted. Is all this great preamble of *the Spirit itself helping our infirmities, and making intercession for us according to the will of God;* is all this come to a poor unutterable groaning? How strange seems this to be! Yet how sweet is it! Some groanings are so small, that they cannot be uttered; for the believer hardly feels them: some groans are so great, that they cannot be expressed; as Job xxiii. 2. *Even to-day is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning.* Sometimes *the Spirit of grace and supplications* is a Spirit of liberty and enlargement unto Christians in prayer; so as they can, by his help, pour out all their hearts to God, and plead strongly: sometimes he is a Spirit of groaning, working only sense of want, and breathings after supply. There is more of the Spirit in a sensible groan, than in many formal words of prayer. The Spirit is called *the Spirit of faith*, 2 Cor. iv. 13.; and *the Spirit of grace and supplication*, Zech. xii. 10. Join both those names together: he is *the Spirit of faith in prayer*, or, *the Spirit of prayer in faith*, Rom. viii. 15. The Spirit of grace belongs to the throne of grace; and his assistance doth give boldness to believers. The more you feel of his help, pray the more boldly.

4. The covenant of grace gives boldness to believers in their coming to the throne of grace. The covenant of grace, as well as the Spirit of grace, belongs to the throne of grace. Dying David had that sight of this covenant, that gave consolation to him under sad reflections: 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. *Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.* Let us consider some properties of the promises of this covenant, (for the covenant of grace is a *covenant of promise*, Rom.

ix. 4. Eph. ii. 12.), that do give just ground for the boldness of faith in coming to the throne of grace.

1*st*, The exceeding greatness of the promises. They *are exceeding great and precious promises, that are given to us*, 2 Peter i. 4. When a believer looks within, he seeth great and manifold wants and necessities; that he hath nothing, and wants every thing. Some have thought, that they wanted more grace than ever any sinner did; yet never any wanted more than is in the promises. There is surely more grace in the promises, than there is want in the creature. Creature-wants cannot exhaust God's fulness of grace; and all this fulness is in the promises. There is more of grace in the promise, than there can be of sin and misery in the man that pleads it. Take heed how you compare your necessities with the fulness of the promises. Nothing you can need, but a supply is promised. Study your hearts and God's covenant, and you will quickly find it to be so. We may ask any thing; for God hath promised every thing, Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

2*dly*, The freeness of the promises gives boldness at the throne of grace. That they are promises of a covenant of grace, proves they must be free. A free promise is a bond given merely from the heart and proper motion of the promiser, without any motion or motive from the party to whom it is made, except it be that of his misery, that grace works on. If the promises were not purely free to us, there could be no boldness in pleading of them. See how the Shunamite pleads with the prophet Elisha, 2 Kings iv. 28. *Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?* As if she had said, "It was not at my desire, but of thine own motion, thou "didst promise me a son: and I did not fully believe it at "first: but now the son promised is dead." So may the believer plead: "Lord, I did not ask of thee a promise of grace "and glory. I was sinfully contented in, and with my natu-"ral lost estate; and thou didst call me, and quicken me with "thy promise: wilt thou not make out thy promise?" The freeness of the promise is the firmest foundation of boldness in pleading its performance. No other promises, but free ones, are in the covenant of grace; and no other pleading of them but as free, is allowed to them that come to the throne

of grace. If thou be for merit and worth in thyself, go elsewhere; there is no place for such proud rich folks at this court.

3dly, The sureness of the promises of the covenant of grace, is another ground of boldness at the throne of grace. They are *the sure mercies of David*, Isaiah lv. 3. Sure, because *of grace:* Rom. iv. 16. *Therefore it* (the promise, or the inheritance promised) *is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.* A promise is made for faith; (would ever God or man promise, but to be believed?) faith is given for, and acts on the promise; (believing without a promise, is dreaming). A promise made by the *God of all grace*, 1 Peter v. 10. to sinners void of all grace, to give all grace to them, must be a promise of grace: the believer of this promise must, and can have nothing in his eye, but the grace of the promiser. Now, saith Paul, it is this grace of the promise and promiser, that makes the blessing promised *sure to all the seed.* Again, the promises of God are sure, because they are his, Heb. vi. 17, 18.; promises sworn for putting an end to the strife of unbelief. Balaam was a bad man, and therefore called a *mad prophet*, 2 Peter ii. 16.; yet, by the over-ruling Spirit of God upon him, spoke truly and highly, Numb. xxiii. 19. *God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?* All God's promises are sure, because they are his promises that cannot lie. And they are yet farther *confirmed of God in Christ*, Gal. iii. 17. So that the believer, in his pleading of God's promises, may lay down this conclusion: I want indeed great and many blessings; but I want nothing, I ask nothing, but what he hath promised who cannot lie, and what is confirmed in Jesus Christ, *the Amen, the true and faithful witness.* Believers fail greatly in their neglect to quicken and strengthen their faith, by taking up the promises in their full extent, fulness, freeness, and certainty. It is always found, that faith is weak, when the promises are mean in our eyes: but if the promise appear, and shine in its glory, as God's faithful word; then faith is aloft, and acts strongly. Hence it is, that all strong believing gives glory to the promises, Rom. iv. 20. and weak

faith reflects on him, Psal. lxxvii. 8, 9. *Hath God forgotten to be gracious? doth his promise fail for evermore?* Alas! it was the good man's infirmity to say and think so, ver. 10. But from his arguing I observe, that where faith is feeble, a man thinks the promise fails; (as a giddy man thinks the rock he stands on, shakes and reels, when all the shaking is in his head or legs); and when he thinks the promise fails, he thinks the promiser is changed from what he was when he made it. And it borders on blasphemy, to rob God, by our unbelief, of his glorious attribute of unchangeableness. If you have a mind to believe, keep still the promise in your eye; if you would believe strongly, view the promise narrowly and steadily. The promise is both the father and mother of faith; it both begets faith, and feeds it. Your first believing is from the power of the promise; and the continued and growing life of faith, is by sucking and drawing nourishment from the breasts of the promise.

5. Another ground of the boldness of believers in their approaches to the throne of grace, is, their privileges that they are possessed of. So the apostle argues, Heb. x. 19, 20, 21. to *drawing near with full assurance of faith*, verse 22. Some of these I shall name, with this caution, That though all believers have them, yet all do not know they have them; and therefore all do not use them as they ought, and would, if they knew them to be theirs. But all should therefore labour to know them, that they may use them to the glory of the giver, and to the comfort and edification of the receivers.

1*st*, The first of these privileges, is election. And justly it is called the first: for nothing can be before it; for itself is before time; and all that they afterwards receive, flows from it. Election is that eternal and adorable act of free grace, wherein God the Father passed over his love to a select company of mankind, that were to come into the world; appointing them to salvation; appointing a Saviour for them, and all means fit to accomplish his design of love on them, to the praise of his grace, Eph. i. 4, 5, 6. This blessing is revealed in believing. When God gives faith, he makes known his electing love; and when we act faith, we may see it. Faith is *the faith of God's elect*, Tit. i. 1.

is, when seen, is a great ground of boldness at the throne grace: Luke xviii. 7. *Shall not God avenge his own elect, t cry unto him day and night?* This our Lord prays upon John xvii. 9, 10. *I pray for them: I pray not for the world; for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine. And mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them.* if our Lord had said, "I am sure to be heard; for I pray or them that are partakers of thine everlasting love. They re thine by election, and given to me; they are mine, by eceiving and redeeming of them." We are bid *give diligence to make our calling and election sure*, 2 Pet. i. 10. They sure in themselves, and sure to God; but we should ke them sure to ourselves: and many Christians smart ly by neglecting this diligence.

Rdly, The gift of Christ for us, is a great privilege that es boldness at the throne of grace. So the apostle argues, m. viii. 32. *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered up for us all* (you may see who this *all* are, ver. 28, 29,) *how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* if he had said, "It is a small thing to God to give us all ther things, when he hath given his Son. We receive ow many blessings, blessed be the giver; we have greater hings in the promise than we yet receive, or can yet receive; but shall surely receive in his time: yet all we get, nd shall to eternity receive, is far less than the gift of Christ." It is like our Lord had respect to this in that rd to the woman of Samaria, John iv. 10. *If thou knewest gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee ng water.* If she had known Christ as the well of salva- to sinners, she would have employed him, and should e been accepted of him. But here many Christians k: they doubt not but Christ was given for his church l people, but they know not how to apply this to themes. If I knew, say many, that Christ was given for , I would then come boldly to the throne of grace, and any thing confidently. I answer, None can know that rist was given for them, till they come unto him: and that come to him, may know that he was given for them,

and should believe it. He was given by the will of the Father, and his own, for his elect. This is a secret hid with God. He comes to men in the gospel, offering himself, and all his purchase and fulness, to all that hear of it. He that hath his heart drawn forth to like this bargain, and accepts by faith of the Saviour, and of his great salvation, hath possession thereof immediately; and by that may come to know, that it was designed for him in God's purpose of love. So Paul, Gal. i. 14, 15, 16. he was one of the holiest and most religious Jews in their church; and yet was at the same time one of the most wicked young men in all the country: a very hypocrite, a proud self-justiciary, and a bloody persecutor of Christ and his church. Yet of this wicked creature it is here said, that *God had separated him from his mother's womb;* and Acts iv. 15. *He is a chosen vessel unto me;* I will pour out of my grace on him, and will do much for him, and by him. When did all this break out? *When he called me by his grace, and revealed his Son in me.* Then he can say, Gal. ii. 20. *He loved me, and gave himself for me;* and again, 1 Tim. i. 15. *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.* All say so: but had he any mind of thee? and hast thou any share in his coming to save sinners? Yes, saith he, *of whom I am the chief.* He came to save me the chief of sinners. Any sinner may come after me, and expect mercy at Christ's hand, when Paul hath sped so well, ver. 16. He hath made me a pattern of his mercy, for the encouragement of all sinners that have a mind for a good turn from Jesus Christ.

3*dly*, The privilege of actual reconciliation, and of being brought into a state of grace, is a ground of boldness in coming to the throne of grace, Rom. v. 9, 10.; where the apostle having shewn God's love in giving Christ to the death for us, ver. 8. he adds the blessings that flow from this gift; *justification by his blood*, and therefore *much more salvation from wrath through him*, ver. 9.; and *reconciliation to God by his death*, and therefore *much more salvation by his life*, ver. 10. The improvement he makes thereof, is in ver. 11. *And not only so, but we also joy in God*, (the original is, *we*

glory or boast in God), through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. A state of grace, is a state of boldness. All that are in it should, and all that know they are in it will, use boldness of faith at this throne of grace, Rom. v. 1,—6.

6. The experiences of believers are a great ground of boldness. *Experience works hope*, Rom. v. 4. The experience of others, as well as our own, is of great use herein. Sometimes we find David improving the experience of others for the strengthening his own faith; sometimes he offers his own experience for the comfort of others, Psal. lxvi. 16. *Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.* Because David was in distress of conscience, and got peace and pardon, Psal. xxxii. 1, 6. *For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found.* Psal. cxix. 74. *They that fear thee, will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word.* There is no Christian that hath not experience. As he hath a soul that needs much to be done for it, so the Lord doth much for all he saves. And because the Lord dealeth variously with his people, therefore there is much difference in their experiences. Yet because all believers are members of the same body, and receive all from the same head, Jesus Christ, there is some skill and capacity in every Christian to understand, and to be profited by the experience of any Christian. Hence it is, that communicating of experiences is a Christian duty, and a good part of the communion of saints. But there is much Christian prudence requisite in the discharge of it. Let no man boast of a false gift, and pretend to that he hath no sense of; nor talk vainly and proudly of what God hath done for him. All true experiences are acts of grace from God felt on the soul. And grace is humbling; 1 Cor. iv. 7. *For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it? why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?* Three questions confounding the pride of men and Christians.

Of these experiences that should give boldness in coming to the throne of grace, I shall name three.

1*st*, The experience of the first visit of grace, is a good ground of confidence in asking any blessing of God. Can you remember when you were dead in sin, and had no thought of grace, nor of thy need and want of it, but wast well content with thy lost state; and that, in this state, grace came from this throne, and did beset thy heart, and overcome it? May you not argue, If the Lord sought me out, and found me in my departing from him, and stopped me, and turned my heart towards himself; may not I come now confidently, and ask mercy and grace? It is a matter of great use to believers, to keep up a savoury remembrance of the gracious change that preventing grace wrought upon them. Paul could never forget first Christ's visit to him, but speaks of it before kings and rulers, and people, Acts xxii. 26. He remembers time and place, and every circumstance. I say not that Christ's first visit is so sensible to all, or (it may be) to any, as it was to Paul. But Christ's work of grace may be known by itself, even when some circumstances of time, and place, and outward means, are not known.

2*dly*, The experience of the Spirit of prayer, and of answers of prayer, is a great ground of boldness of faith. I join these two together, for the Lord usually doth so: Psalm cxvi. 1, 2. *I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, I will call upon him as long as I live.* Have ye not known, that sometimes you have been *so troubled, that you could not speak?* as Psalm lxxvii. 4.: that your hearts have been so bound up, and straitened, that you could say nothing, and do nothing, before the Lord; but sit as dumb and oppressed, all dark above, all dead within, and all doors shut upon you; you durst not neglect prayer, and you could not perform it? and have you not quickly found the two-leaved gates cast open to you, your hearts enlarged, and your mouth wide open in asking? The remembrance of such experiences should strengthen the confidence of your faith. Have you not known what the answer of prayer is? that *he hath prepared your heart, and hath caused his ear to hear?* as Psal. x. 17. Come the more boldly at all other times. They are triflers in prayer, that know nothing of God by the name of *hearer of prayer*, Psal. lxv. 2.

They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy. Whoever hath gone forth weeping, bearing (and sowing) *his precious seed, hath doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him,* Psalm cxxvi. 5, 6.; and should therefore sow in hope.

3dly, The experience of communion and fellowship with God, is a great ground of boldness in coming to the throne of grace for more. Such as have most of this blessing, desire most earnestly more of it, and may desire it the more confidently, 1 John i. 1, 2, 3, 4. Surely we have this fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Christ Jesus; and we would fain have you share with us therein, that your joy may be full. This communion with God is a mystery, undoubted to him that tasteth it, and surpassing all the delights of sense or reason; incredible and unintelligible to all that have it not. *A stranger intermeddles not with this joy,* Prov. xiv. 10. It lies more deep, than that any eye of flesh can see it. It is of that nature, that only tasting can declare its transcendent sweetness: Psal. xxxiv. 8. *O taste and see that the Lord is good.* Saints feel much of it, they talk much of it, the word is full of suitable and savoury expressions of it; yet all are riddles and dark parables to them that experience it not. You that know what it is, though you cannot express it, yet you can relish and understand some sound words about it. Yet know what it is to be brought near to him, and to have the clouds and vails, that are either on your hearts, or on his face, scattered, and the light of his countenance lifted up upon you, Psal. iv. 6, 7. You have been sometimes so in the mount, as to think, O, how good it is to be here! You have known what the warm and healing beams of the Sun of Righteousness upon you are, Mal. iv. 2. You have tasted that in his company, that hath made the puddle of the world's weals of comfort lothsome and unsavoury; yea, as hath made you groan in this tabernacle, and long to be in at that complete and uninterrupted communion above, whereof all you taste on earth, is but a small earnest and first-fruits. And may not, should not such come boldly to the throne of grace?

APPLICATION. Is there an allowed boldness in coming to the throne of grace? Then let us use this boldness. Alas! many come doubtingly and discouragedly. Their unbelief is so strong, and their faith so weak, that they not only come without this boldness, but think that they ought not to come with it, but with a frame contrary to it. They think, that it is true humility, to come with a fear, that is inconsistent with this boldness. It is indeed required, that men should come before the Lord with awful fear and reverence, and that they should judge themselves unworthy and undeserving, both of the privilege of coming, and of the least of the blessings they come for. Yet the boldness of faith is not prejudiced thereby. I shall therefore answer some of the common pleas of unbelief, as to this privilege, and its improvement.

Object. 1. Is from conscience of sin and guilt, grounded specially on these two scriptures, Psal. lxvi. 18. and 1 John iii. 20. This plea seems to be strong, and to justify or excuse doubtings in Christians; and doth usually mar the due sense of this duty, of coming boldly to the throne of grace. To remove it therefore, consider, that sin affects the heart and conscience two ways. 1. It defiles the conscience. 2. It disturbs it.

1. Sin defiles the conscience: Tit. i. 15. *Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.*

But we must see when and how the conscience is defiled by sin. Conscience is God's tribunal in every man. It is an active and awful power in men, judging of themselves, as to their state and actions, as they think God judgeth of them. So that there are two main causes tried, and to be decided, at this court of conscience. 1. *Am I at peace with God, and he with me?* And this is only truly resolved, when conscience pronounceth as God declares in his word. And that declaration is, That every man by nature, and as in the first Adam, is an enemy to God, and God to him; and that every one that is in Jesus Christ by faith, is a child and friend of God, and God is at peace with him. The answer then is different, if according to truth. Some may, but will not conclude their state of enmity, by their not believing on Jesus Christ; some may, but dare not conclude, that they are at peace with God,

though they cannot deny their faith in Jesus Christ. 2. A second cause is about particular actions: and the question then is, *Is this, or that, or the other action, pleasing or displeasing to God?* And this is to be determined by the light of conscience, acting according to God's holy law. For God is the only Lord of conscience, and his will the only rule and law of conscience. Conscience therefore may be three ways defiled.

1*st*, By the unpardoned guilt of a natural state, as it is in all unbelievers. Nothing can *purge the conscience, but the blood of Christ*, Heb. ix. 14. An unbeliever doth not apply to it, nor apply it to himself, and God applies it to none but by faith. Therefore all such unbelievers have all the lothsome filth of their natural state lying on their consciences, defiling it. *The answer of a good conscience towards God, is by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. iii. 21. All unbelievers consciences can speak nothing towards God, by any thing Christ hath done or suffered; for they know him not, and are not in him. They would give an answer, or make their plea, from their good works and honest meanings. But all such answers and pleas are rejected by God, in his judging of a man's state. For all God's judgments of men's state proceeds on these two, in Christ, or out of Christ. And as it is with them with respect to one or other of these two, so do men stand or fall before God's judgment, whatever the judgment of their consciences be.

2*dly*, Conscience is defiled by sinful actions, known to be such. Now, if these be loved, and delighted in, they do justly mar confidence; neither can any man in this case draw near to God, but with the mouth, and hypocritically, Isa. xxix. 13. This is a frame not to be found in a believer. He may be guilty of known sin, but it is not delighted in. To this David's words refer, Psal. lxvi. 18. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.* It is not, *If there be iniquity in my heart;* for *who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?* Prov. xx. 9. It is not, *If I see iniquity in my heart;* for where there is least sin, it is best seen. Paul saw enough, Rom. vii. 23, 24, 25. and groaned under it; and yet blesseth God through Jesus Christ for the hope of victory. But it is only, *If I regard iniquity in my heart*, (if I look kindly

on it), *God will not hear me.* And indeed the man in this case cannot pray. It is as impossible that a person approving and loving sin, can make a real approach to God, as it is for a man to depart from, and approach to one, at the same time, and with the same motion.

3*dly*, The conscience is defiled by doubtful practice. Of this the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. viii. 7. *And their conscience being weak, is defiled.* To this belong also the words in Rom. xiv. 5. *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind;* and ver. 22, 23. *Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.* In deliberate actions, especially of worship to God, to act without a clear warrant from the word of God, defileth the conscience.

2. Sin disturbes the conscience. And conscience is disturbed by sin, two ways. 1*st*, When the evil and filth of sin is seen, a man lothes himself therefore. No defilement on the conscience disturbs it, till it be seen. Men like swine wallow in the puddle, and see no filth therein, till God open the eyes of their consciences. 2*dly*, When the danger of sin is seen, and the wrath it deserves is perceived, then perplexing fears, and sensible sorrow, work in the soul. Now, what is the course such a poor creature should take? The sin is committed, the guilt is contracted, the conscience is defiled, the defilement is seen, disturbance and trouble is felt in the conscience; what should such a sick soul do? Will any say to him, Wash thyself where thou canst, and cast away the burden of thy sin the best way thou canst, and then come to the throne of grace? This would be strange gospel indeed. We know no other course a man should take in this case, but coming to the throne of grace, to have the conscience sprinkled with the blood of Christ, the only cordial for a disturbed conscience, and the only purger of a defiled conscience. Therefore Peter was quite out in his prayer; he prayed backward, when he said, *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord,* Luke iv. 8. Were ever those words uttered at the knees of Jesus Christ? He had said better, if he had prayed, "Lord, come near "to me, and abide with me, and let me ever abide with thee: "for I am a sinful man. Where can a sinful man be better, "than with the Saviour of sinners?" But Peter's prayer is the natural prayer of every man that seeth his sinfulness, and

is ignorant of Jesus Christ. The publican understood prayer, and plied it better, Luke xviii. 13. when he said, *God be merciful to me a sinner.* "I feel my sinfulness, I see thy mercy, "Lord, let them meet; and thy mercy shall be glorified, and "I saved." Whoever therefore are distressed with the guilt of sin in their consciences, or with the power of it in their hearts and lives, must seek all their relief at this throne of grace. It is only the power of that grace revealed and dispensed at this throne of grace, that is too hard for sin, and all its powers. And for any man to think to subdue sin, except by the power of this grace; or to think that he shall have this powerful grace, without coming for it to the throne of grace, is to dream to his own destruction.

Object. 2. I am in the dark about my interest in God and Christ, and therefore I cannot come boldly to this throne. If I did know that God was at peace with me, and I reconciled to him, and justified, then I might come boldly.

Ans. 1. Whose fault is it, that thy interest in Christ is not put out of question? Were Christians more in self-examination, more close in walking with God; and if they had more near communion with God, and were more in acting of faith, this shameful darkness and doubting would quickly vanish. It is a thing to be heavily bewailed, that many Christians have lived twenty or forty years, since Christ called them by his grace, yet doubting is their life; they doubted when they began, they go on doubting, and many die doubting, when the blame is justly to be laid on themselves. There is an assurance of faith, that is a duty, as well as a blessing, Heb. x. 22. And were it more minded as a duty, it would be more often attained as a mercy. That assurance of faith I press you to have, stands in firm and strong believing. The faithful promise of Christ in the gospel, is the foundation of it. And the ground will bear all the weight we can lay on it. This assurance is not only a blessing that comes down from heaven, but it may, by his blessing of means, spring up out of the soul; I mean, it may spring out of the lively vigorous actings of faith. The great believers we read of in the word, the confidence of their faith rose up to that height and strength that we admire, from a clear persuasion of the truth of the

promises, and of the faithfulness of the maker of them. So it is said of Abraham, Rom. iv. 20, 21. *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.* And lest any should think, that because the man was singular, and the case singular, therefore ordinary believers may only wonder at it, and not attempt to imitate it; the apostle adds, ver. 23, 24. *Now it was not written* (in Gen. xv. 6.) *for his sake alone; but for us also*, &c. As if the apostle had said, "You see what "ground Abraham had for his faith; how strongly he built "upon it, and how pleasing that was to God. You have the "same ground; build ye also upon it by faith, and that faith "in you will be as pleasing to God." Abraham had God's promise to build upon. In this promise there was its outward part and external. And this was an offspring of his body by Sarah, and the land of Canaan for an inheritance. The spiritual and main thing in the promise, was Jesus Christ the Saviour, and the blessing of eternal salvation in him. This was Abraham's gospel: Gal. iii. 8, 9. *And the scriptures foreseeing* (that is the author of the scriptures foreseeing) *that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached the gospel before unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham.* His gospel and promise was of Christ to come, and of salvation by him. Ours is the promise of salvation in Christ come already *delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification*, Rom. iv. 25.; that is, imprisoned for our debt, and set at liberty for our discharge. Now, consider, how Abraham improved this promise. He had nothing else in his eye, he would consider nothing, but the promise, and the faithful and mighty promiser. So must we. When we give place to considering of ourselves, our sinfulness and unworthiness; when we consider the greatness of the blessings in the promise, how far they are beyond our deserving, how many things there be that do make it incredible to reason that we should ever receive, or that God should ever give such great things to us, faith must be at a stand. It is as incredible to an awakened conscience, that God should justify a sinner, as it was to rea-

son, that Abraham should have a son by Sarah. Our only way is, to consider the promise. God hath said it, and he will perform it, and I will believe it. If all the angels in heaven, or faithful men on earth, had said, that God will save me from sin and wrath by Jesus Christ; that such a vile creature as I am in myself, shall be excepted in that beloved, I durst not believe it. But when God himself hath said so, why should I doubt it? God's promise in the gospel desorves our highest trust and confidence; and such as view it in all its grace, truth, and power, will pay it that due.

Ans. 2. Suppose thy want of clearness as to thy interest in Christ, and that it is thine own fault; may you not come boldly to the throne of grace for satisfaction therein? If you know not who is your Father, may you not come to him to know it? There are many worse prayers made than this, That the Lord would make manifest his own work in you. *Lord, help my unbelief*, was a believer's prayer. Complaining of doubtings and darkness, and praying for light and clearness, hath often dispelled the clouds, and brought the soul under a bright sun-shine.

Ans. 3. Direct trusting on God, when saints have been in darkness as to their interest in him, is required and commanded in the word, Isa. l. 10. *Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.* What had the woman of Canaan, Matth. xv. 22,—28. but direct trusting? Christ was silent to her first crying unto him; when the disciples crave an answer for her, Christ tells her and them, that he was not sent for such as she; when she comes and worships him, saying, *Lord, help me*, he answers her humble believing prayer with reproach. Yet all shakes her not; but by faith she relies upon Christ, and makes an argument from this very reproach. And blessed was the issue.

Object. 3. What should a man do that never came to the throne of grace before? I can understand how a believer may, and should come boldly. It is no wonder that a poor beggar go boldly to that door, that he hath been often at, and was never sent empty from. But can, or may a poor sinner come boldly, the first time he comes?

Ans. 1. It is granted, that usually first approaches to the throne of grace, are feeble and weak; and not with that confidence of faith that believers do grow unto by experience, and exercise of faith.

Ans. 2. Yet a man may come boldly at the first time. There is good ground for it. 1. Consider the text, *Let us come boldly, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace.* Who can, or should put in for these blessings; more than he that never yet got any! Do receivers come to receive daily more grace and mercy; and may not one, utterly destitute and needy, beg somewhat of this mercy and grace! 2. Consider the ground of this boldness lies fair and equal to all that will use it in-coming. To name only now the promise of God: This is laid before all men in the gospel. Have you a hand of faith to lay hold on it? That makes it yours. God's promise is as sure and true before we believe it, as after. Believing adds nothing to the sureness of the promise. Our believing is like a drowning man's catching and laying hold on a rope thrown out to him; his laying hold on it makes not the rope stronger, yet it makes the rope his defence. The promise is equally true before believing and after believing; but it is no man's known property, till it be believed. The cords of salvation are cast out in the gospel to multitudes; yet most perish, because they do not lay hold on them. No man can sink into hell, that holds the promise of salvation by the arm of faith. 3. Consider how the Lord directs, Jer. iii. 19. *But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the host of nations?* That is dreadful indeed, when God makes such a question. Who can answer the Lord's questions, but himself? *And I said, Thou shalt call me, My Father, and shalt not turn away from me.* A most blessed answer to a dreadful question. Ver. 4. *Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?* An interest in God by Christ is offered and promised to all in the gospel; plead it by faith, and it is yours.

3. We find instances in the word, (and the like the Lord can make again), of great confidence in some at their first coming to the throne of grace: As the blind man, Mark x.

46,—52. He only heard of Christ's passing by: he staid not for Christ's calling him, but *began to cry out, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. When many charged him to hold his peace, he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.* "Christ was never in my way before, and he "shall not pass now without shewing mercy on me, if crying "may prevail." And that his crying was in faith, Christ witnesseth, ver. 52. In all appearance, the woman of Canaan was never at the throne of grace before, Matt. xv. 22,—28. at least, never at Christ's feet before: yet she managed her first address with that confidence, that she not only got her desire, but that high commendation with it, *O woman, great is thy faith.* So the centurion, Matt. viii. 5—10. But above all instances, is that of the believing thief on the cross, Luke xxiii. 40,—43. Never had the throne of grace so little to encourage an address to it, as when the King of grace was dying on the cross. Never had a sinner less encouragement to come to the throne of grace, than when the Saviour was nailed to one tree, and the sinner to another. Marvellous faith! a dying sinner, dying for his sins, employs a dying Saviour for salvation, *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.* How little did Christ nailed to, and dying on the cross, look like a King? How strong was the man's faith to believe, that Christ, through death, was going to his kingdom? and that Christ's gracious thought of him would save him? *And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.* As if our Lord had said, "This is thy first and "thy last address to me, verily it shall be heard." Believers do not think how pleasing to the Lord, large and high thoughts of the sufficiency, fulness, and freedom of the grace that is in Jesus Christ, are. Believers should *devise liberal things, and by liberal things they shall stand,* Isa. xxxii. 8. Let a believer ask, and think on the warrant of the promise, as much as he can; the Lord is *able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. Unto him be, glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.* Eph. iii. 20, 21.

SERMON V.

HEB. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we m obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

IT is God's great and wonderful mercy, that ever there w a throne of grace erected and revealed, and that he makes suc a proclamation as this in his word, *Let all men come boldly to* I have spoken unto two things in the text. 1. Of the thro of grace, to which we are invited to come. 2. Of the bol ness allowed in coming to it.

HEAD III. The third thing follows to be spoke to, a *ground of this boldness*, implied in this *therefore*. And we mu look back to ver. 14, 15. for the finding the force of th *therefore*. The words are, *Seeing then that we have a gre High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of Go let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Pri which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, b was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let therefore come boldly*, &c.

The doctrine I am to handle from this inference of the apo tle is this.

DOCT. *That the main ground of all the boldness allowed coming to the throne of grace, is in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The interest, and room, and place, that Christ hath in th throne of grace, is the ground of all allowed boldness in co ing to it. When people are secure, nothing is more commo practised by them, than fearless rushing into God's presen Any carnal careless sinner can, when he will, bow the kn and make that he calls a prayer to God. But when conscien is awakened, and light darts in to make them know somewh of God, and of themselves, it is then found a matter of wo derful mystery and difficulty, to perceive any thing that c justly and sufficiently support the confidence of a self-co

damned sinner, in his approaches to God for mercy. Hence it is so often seen, that this is the common way of all the ungodly, and of such as are ignorant of God in Christ. While they are secure, and blind, and hardened, they feel nothing, and fear nothing: but when death and judgment approach, and stare them near in the face; and when they begin to think in earnest, that they must stand before God, and receive their eternal doom, being ignorant of a Mediator, and quite estranged from any believing employing of him, they sink in discouragement and despair. And, alas! how many miserable sinners are there, that are never awakened out of the sleep of security, until they are plunged in the very pit of despair?

The resolution therefore of this question, How a sinner may draw near to the throne of grace with confidence, so as he may be welcomed by him that sitteth on it, and may receive good things thence? is only in this, that this boldness is all in and by Jesus Christ. My work therefore at this time (and it is indeed the main work of ministers at all times) is, to declare and shew you, *how our Lord Jesus Christ is the ground and foundation of true confidence in coming to God.* And herein I would lead you to such things that concern the Lord Jesus as are commonly known, usually talked of, but rarely duly pondered and improved.

1. Let us consider the person of this Mediator by whom we may *have access with boldness*, Eph. iii. 12. A wonderful person! the Son of God made man; a marvellous man; by whom all men may be accepted with God, when there is not a man in the world that can be accepted of God in his own name: yet all that come in Christ's name are accepted. Our Lord Jesus Christ is God's own Son, the Son of God tabernacling in the flesh; *God manifest in the flesh; the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person*, Heb. i. 3. *There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time*, 1 Tim. ii. 6, 7. In due time it will be seen, what this ransom was paid for, and for whom: for every one of the ransomed shall get their liberty and inheritance in God's time and way. People commonly profess the faith of this truth, That our Mediator is God and man. But how

little is it improved by faith? We do not *consider him*, how great a person he is, and how fit for us, Heb. iii. 1, 2. Such as have any serious thoughts of God, and of themselves (and they are in a forlorn state that have none), find a necessity of a Mediator, when they consider the strictness of his justice, the power of his wrath, the perfect purity and holiness of his nature, compared with the sinfulness and vileness of their own nature, hearts, and lives. But there is another deeper thought of God, that will discover as great necessity of a Mediator; and that is of his greatness. *With God is terrible majesty;* with God is unsearchable glory. How can there be a bold and acceptable approach to him of whom we cannot frame a right suitable thought? How is it avoidable, but that all our worship must be to an *unknown God?* for *no man hath seen God at any time*, John i. 18. Here comes in the Mediator Jesus Christ; who is not only a screen betwixt justice and us, but is a glass wherein we may behold the glory of God. This glory is only to be beheld in the *face or person of Jesus Christ*, 2 Cor. iv. 6. All other views of God's glory are either confounding, or but vain unprofitable notions. All the speculations of the Pagans, that polished the dim light of nature; and all the curious studies of some called Christians, about the nature, being, properties, and attributes of God, are nothing but pretty pieces of philosophy. There is nothing of sound theology in those thoughts, unless they be all stinted, limited, directed to, and determined by that discovery that God makes of himself to us in and by his Son Jesus Christ. The mediation then of Jesus Christ, is not only an argument which, and on which we may plead with God; but it is the mean by which only we must approach to God, and the light wherein we see, and know savingly the God we worship. He knew the way best, who is *the way to the Father*, and said, *No man cometh to the Father but by me;* and did answer Philip's weighty and very natural desire, *Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth*, thus, *Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father: and how sayest thou, Shew us the Father?* John xiv. 6, 7, 8, 9. They all worship an idol, or wander in a perfect maze and labyrinth, that seek God out of Jesus Christ. No where else

is he to be sought or found, but as a consuming fire. God of old put his name at Jerusalem; to it they must come with their solemn sacrifices; when afar off, they must look to it, as Dan. vi. 10. When they are bid *remember the Lord afar off*, it is added, *and let Jerusalem come into your mind*, Jer. li. 50. Now, Jerusalem, temple, altar, holy of holies, mercy-seat, priests, sacrifices, *&c.* were all but shadows of Jesus Christ. Under the New Testament, when Christ is come, the name of God is in him, and all the worship and approaches are to be made to God dwelling in this *true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man*, Heb. viii. 2.

2. Let us consider our Lord's office of High Priest. So the apostle calls him *our great High Priest*, and *we have him*, ver. 14. This is a great ground of boldness in dealing with God, that we have Christ for a High Priest. He was of God's own chusing and calling. He is not of our chusing, but he is for our using. Should that man be called a Christian, who hath no use for this great High Priest? *High priests were taken from among men, and ordained from men in things pertaining to God*, Heb. v. 1. Consider the honour of this office to Christ, and its usefulness to his people. *He glorified not himself to be made an High Priest; but he that said to him*, ver. 5. Christ's offices of King and Prophet carry visible plain glory in them. But to be made an High Priest, especially when he is to be both priest, altar, and sacrifice, seems to have no glory, but abasement. But if we look to the inside of this office, it excels in glory. What inconceivable glory is it to Christ, to be the reconciler of all things, to take up so honourably the grand quarrel betwixt angry heaven and sinful earth, to *purge our sins by* the sacrifice of *himself*, and then *sit down at the right hand of the Majesty on high?* Heb. i. 3.; to offer a sacrifice, in the virtue whereof an innumerable company, out of all nations, tongues, and languages, are redeemed, and justified, and glorified: for which he shall be eternally praised in heaven, by all the happy inhabitants of that blessed place! Rev. v. 9. As for the usefulness of this office to his people, I shall only name two things. 1. In this office he manageth all our business with God; such as we could never have done ourselves; and must be eternally undone, if it were not done for us: to

satisfy justice, fulfil the law, and bring us in a sure title to the inheritance of heaven. 2. By him we offer all our spiritual services, and have them presented by him for acceptance, Heb. xiii. 15. We must do all *in his name*, Col. iii. 17.

3. Let us consider what our Lord did when he was on earth, and thence we have great ground for confidence in coming to the throne of grace. This the apostle hath in his eye, ver. 15. and chap. v. 7. Two things I would take some notice of on this point. 1. He had the same things for substance as errands to the throne of grace that we have. 2. That he did ply the throne of grace as we should. Only permitting this, that there is but a likeness in what he did, to what we should do at the throne of grace: and that likeness consistent with manifold differences, as we shall regard.

1*st*, Our Lord Jesus Christ had the same things, and the chief of them, that are to us errands to the throne of grace. I shall instance in some of them, and answer an objection.

(1.) Our Lord had affliction for an errand, and more of it than any of his people. He was afflicted; yea, *smitten of God and afflicted*, Isa. liii. 4. *He was oppressed and afflicted*, ver. 7. *If any man be afflicted, let him pray*, James v. 13. When Christ was afflicted, he prays.

(2.) Our Lord was deserted. Blessed be his name for it. We should rejoice, that he had not a life without clouds. The bitterest and saddest desertion that ever a believer was under, is nothing to what Christ met with, when he cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* None are so much to be pitied as a saint under desertion. When affliction is heavy and pressing, if all be clear above, though there be clouds round about, yet if the Lord smile from heaven, a Christian's case is not much to be pitied. But if all be dark about, and the darkest of all clouds on the amiable face of God, this is the extremity our Lord was in. Yet he prayed, and in his agony prayed yet more fervently. Deserted believers, take comfort in a deserted Saviour. His desertion was penal, yours but medicinal. Though it be bitter physic, it is of the great Physician's prescription; and he can and will bless it, and make you bless him, both for the physic and the cure.

(3.) Christ had temptation as an errand to his Father: *In*

all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, ver. 15. O that Christians would learn to behave themselves under temptation, in some measure, as Christ did! Temptation to Christ was a far other thing than it is to us. Temptation is bad to us, because of the danger of it; therefore he bids us, *Watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation*, Matth. xxvi. 42. when he was in the depth of his agony. But temptation to Christ was a mere affliction. There were never but two sinless men in the world, the first and second Adam. Satan came to both. When he came to the first Adam, he found nothing of his own in him; but he quickly got somewhat put in him, and left it with him, and in him and all his posterity. When he came to the second Adam, he found nothing in him, and could put nothing in him by temptation, John xiv. 30. The holier a saint be, and the more gross the sin he is tempted to, and the more hatred he have of the sin, the greater is his trouble in and by the temptation. What affliction then must it have been to Chtist to be so tempted as he was? Matth. iv.

(4.) Our Lord had the charge and burden of sin on his soul, not upon his conscience: *The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all*, Isa. liii. 6. And was not that a mighty load? Sense of sin is the greatest discouragement to believers. But never was there a man out of hell, or in it, that had such a load of sin on him as Christ had. *His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree*, 1 Pet. ii. 24. Law and justice charged Christ severely; and exacted more of him, than ever they did of any other person. None but *Christ was made sin*, 2 Cor. v. 21. Men are sinners by nature, and increase their sinfulness by their life; and an inexhaustible fountain of sin is in their heart, Eccl. ix. 3. But none of them is, or can be made sin. *He only that knew no sin, was made sin.* And because he was made sin for us, he was also *made a curse for us*, Gal. iii. 13. The law curseth the sinner, but cannot make a sinner a curse for others: it can, and doth make him accursed, and a curse for himself. Here is heaven's art: all the righteousness we are made, flows from *Christ's being made sin for us*; all the blessing we get, springs out of *Christ's being made a curse for us.* Believers, learn where to seek and find true

blood must be shed, or we cannot enter; we must see it by faith, or we dare not venture. We must *come to the blood of sprinkling*, Heb. xii. 24. We dare not step one step into God's awful presence, unless we see the way marked, consecrated, and sprinkled with the Mediator's blood. How shall the unholiest of sinners venture to come into the holiest of all, God's presence? Yes, saith the Holy Ghost, such may, *by the blood of Jesus*. Let us therefore consider what this blood of Christ doth, and speaks, in order to our boldness in approaching to the throne of grace.

1*st*, This blood satisfies justice, and answers all the claims and charges of the law against us. What mars boldness, like fears of a standing controversy betwixt heaven and us! God is holy, we are vile sinners; God's law is strict, we have sinfully broke it, and deserve hell most justly. No answer can be given, but by this blood. What would the law have, but Christ gave? Would the law have a sinless man to answer it, as it was first given to sinless Adam? *Lo, I come*, saith our Lord Jesus, without all sin; a man against whom, for himself, the law hath no charge or challenge. Would the law have perfect sinless obedience? Christ did perform it. Must the law have life and blood for every breach of it? Christ never broke the law; but the burden of millions of breakers, and breaches of it lay on him, and his blood was shed for them: and thereby he fulfilled the law, *put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*, Heb. ix. 26.; *finished the transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, brought in everlasting righteousness, sealed up the vision and prophecy, and anointed the most holy*, Dan. ix. 24. You can never have boldness at the throne of grace, unless by faith you apply this blood. *Christ is set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood*, Rom. iii. 25. The propitiation is in his blood; faith in it makes it our propitiation.

2*dly*, This blood, as it is satisfying blood, so it is purchasing blood. It is both an atonement and satisfaction, and it is a price. It is redeeming blood for persons, and purchasing blood for blessings. All the blessings we come to the throne of grace for, are all bought by this blood. So that we may say, that though we have nothing, and deserve nothing; yet when we

ask all things, we ask nothing but what is well and truly paid for by our Lord Jesus.

3*dly*, All the blessings purchased and bought by Christ's blood, are bequeathed to us, and left, by him that shed it. Christ's blood is a testamentary bequeathing blood: and believers in their coming to the throne of grace may come as suers for the execution and fulfilment of the last will and testament of our Lord Jesus. For Christ by his death turned the gospel and new covenant into a testament, Heb. ix. 15, 16, 17. His death confirms his testament. His last will is, that all the blessings his blood purchased, might be secured and laid up for, and in due time given forth to them they were purchased for, and bequeathed to. The whole legacy of grace and glory, and all the legatees, are and were well known to the testator and executor, (though not to us particularly); and the testament will be punctually fulfilled.

So much for the assistance to faith that Christ's death affords. Learn to feed on it. He that cannot make a soul meal, and take a soul fill of a slain Saviour, is a sorry Christian. A true Christian is a poor starving sinner, digging in Christ's grave for eternal life. There it only is, and there he surely finds it.

5. We find further in our Lord Jesus, (and indeed every thing in and of him helps forward our confidence in coming to God), that this great person the Son of God in our nature, this great officer that lived so holily, and died so virtuously, that he also rose again from the dead. The resurrection of our Lord is also a mighty ground of boldness: 1 Peter i. 3. *Blessed be the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* If Christ had lain still in his grave, our hope had lain there too; but because he rose, our hope also riseth with him. So 1 Pet. iii. 21. where the apostle hath an elegant similitude. He compares Christ to the ark of Noah. All that were in this ark, were saved, and they only; the deluge drowned all the world besides. They that were saved in the ark, were saved from drowning in the water, and *were saved by water. The like figure whereunto, baptism, now saveth*

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us, (Will bare water-baptism save? No: *Not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God*), *by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.* As if the apostle had said, "He that by faith hath sucked in the virtue "of Christ's resurrection, and can by that faith plead it be-"fore God, is a saved man. If all the world perish in the "deluge of God's wrath, this man is in the ark, and nothing "shall hurt him." But, alas! Christ's resurrection is looked upon by many professors as a part of gospel history and truth, that it is a shame for any to be ignorant or doubt of; and therefore they profess the faith of it. But they consider not, that a great part of the food of our souls, and of our faith, doth lie in this point of truth. This I would shew in three things.

1*st*, Christ's resurrection was a demonstration of the divine dignity of his person: Rom. i. 4. *He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.* The glorious rays of his Godhead did appear in his word and works; and some had eyes to *behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*, even when he dwelt among men, John i. 14. But his glory was under an eclipse till his resurrection. How stately and how sweetly doth he himself express it! Rev. i. 17, 18. *I am the first and the last*, (high names of a divine eternal person): *I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen.* They that saw him dead, could hardly believe he should ever live again; and they that saw him alive, had need of faith to believe he had ever been dead. He asserts both, and we should believe both. Since death entered into the world by sin, never was there a man more truly, really, and fully dead, than the man Christ was, who died for our sins: and there is no man on earth more truly alive, than the man Christ is now a living man in heaven. He in his rising gave proof of his divine power. *He was crucified through weakness, yet he lives by the power of God*, 2 Cor. xiii. 4. There was never such an appearance of weakness in the man Jesus, as when he expired, and lay cold dead in his grave. Never did sin reign so unto death, nor the law's power more appear, than in slaying the second Adam. As

great, and greater, was the appearance of his divine power in his rising again: John x. 17. *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again.* Christ died that he might rise again. He went amongst the dead that he might rise from the dead: ver. 18. *No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.* Christ was bid both die and rise again. Blessed be the commander, and blessed be the obeyer; for our *everlasting life is in this commandment*, John xii. 50. Never any but Christ had this power of his own life. We must yield our life when God calls for it, and till then we must keep it; and when that call comes, we must obey. We die, because we can live no longer, and because our times are in God's hand. And when it shall please the Lord to raise up our bodies at the resurrection, we receive our life again; but have no power to take it up again, till the powerful word of Christ come, *Arise from your graves;* and that word gives us our life again. None but Christ had power of his own life, both to lay it down, and to take it again. We dare, we can, we should do neither; but only obey, and submit to the sovereign will of our high landlord, at whose pleasure we are tenants in these clay cottages.

2dly, Christ's resurrection was a demonstration of the acceptance of the sacrifice of himself; that the blood he shed, and sacrifice he offered, was savoury, and acceptable with God; that the debt was fully paid, and the payment accepted, when the surety was discharged of his prison. Therefore we find it so often written, that *God raised him from the dead*, Acts ii. 24, 32. even when it is said, that *it was not possible that he should be holden of death.* Death and the grave are *strong and cruel*, Song viii. 6. They have taken, or will take all mankind prisoners, and are able to keep them: only they took one prisoner, Jesus Christ, who was too hard, too strong, for them. Death had dominion over him but for a little while, and by his own consent, Rom. vii. 9.; but it *hath no more dominion over him.* But he hath dominion over it: *I have the keys of hell and of death*, Rev. i. 18. Courage, believers in, and heart-lovers of Jesus Christ! Death and hell

are indeed dreadful jails; but as long as Christ keeps the keys, (and that will be till he *cast them both into the lake of fire*, Rev. xx. 14), no believer shall ever be locked up in them. If hell were searched never so narrowly, amongst all the condemned prisoners there, no man or woman could be found in it, in whose heart there was ever one spark of true faith in, or love to the Lord Jesus, Heb. xiii. 20. *God brought again from the dead, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.* Christ is also often said to *rise by his own power.* Christ put forth his divine power in his resurrection: the Father declared his full satisfaction with his undertaking of the work, and payment of the price of redemption, by discharging of him in, and by his resurrection. The angels work was only to roll away the stone; but by his own divine power, his blessed soul did take possession of his dead body; and he did rise up immediately, a truly living man. And this he did by his Father's leave and will; and the angels served only as serjeants and officers, to unlock the prison-doors of the grave: for Christ could easily have removed the stone by his own power, as he did greater things in his resurrection. No wonder the apostle Paul made it one of his great aims in Christianity, to *know the power of Christ's resurrection*, Phil. iii. 10. It is not to know the history of his resurrection, nor is it to know the mystery of his resurrection, but it is to know the power of it. The same power that Christ raised himself from the dead by, is put forth, (and no less is needful) for the raising of a dead sinner. The same power that raised the Saviour, *dead for sin*, is needful for raising a sinner *dead in sin*: Rom. vi. 4. *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should also walk in newness of life*, Eph. i. 19. There is an *exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead*, &c. How loth are men to admit this, that the saving quickening of a sinner requires the same divine power that quickened the dead Saviour? All saving conversions are the fruits of Christ's resurrection, and of almighty power.

3dly, Christ's resurrection is the pledge and earnest of our resurrection, and of eternal life. How great things doth Paul build upon it! 1 Corinthians xv. He proves our resurrection from Christ's resurrection. He argues for Christ's resurrection, by enumerating of absurdities that must follow on the contrary; as, ver. 14. *If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.* Ver. 15. *We* (the apostles) *are found false witnesses of God.* Ver. 17. *Ye are yet in your sins.* Ver. 18. *Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished.* Ver. 19. *We are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.* Ver. 20. *For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. The first Adam was made a living soul*, ver. 45. But when he became a sinner, he became a killing head to all his posterity, Rom. v. 12. *The second Adam is a quickening Spirit*, and gives eternal life to all his seed. And he took possession of this eternal life in his human nature, and in our stead, at his resurrection. He conquers and subdues that death the first Adam brought in, and reigns over it by his grace, Rom. v. 21. Christians, would you aspire after the resurrection of the dead, as Paul did? Phil. iii. 11. direct all your aims, build all your hopes on Christ's resurrection: *Because I live, ye shall live also*, John xiv. 19. This living head will in a little time have no dead members; with his *dead body shall they arise*, Isaiah xxvi. 19.

6. Christ's ascension into heaven, is a ground of boldness in coming to the throne of grace. So in the context, ver. 14. *He is passed into the heavens.* This is great ground of faith, that Christ is in heaven, and *for us hath entered within the vail*, Heb. vi. 20. How dare a sinful man adventure into God's presence? Because there is a sinless man there, that went thither on purpose to mind our business, who are on earth. No man ever went thus into heaven, and on this errand, but our High Priest, John iii. 13. All others go thither to get for themselves: Christ ascended to get, and to give, Psalm lxviii. 18. Eph. iv. 8. How kindly did our Lord deal with his disciples about this, and how hardly were they persuaded to submit to his going away? He told them whither he was

going, and for what; he told them of his returning again, and receiving them to himself, never to part more, John xiv. 2, 3, 4. and yet *sorrow filled their hearts*, chap. xvi. 6. He again saith, ver. 7. *Nevertheless, it is expedient for you that I go away.* If you will not be content, because it is necessary and fit for me, *I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away.* How hard was it to believe this? What was, to all reason, more expedient, yea necessary, than that such weak scholars should have their blessed Master's company? It was so far from seeming expedient to them, that they thought they would be ruined thereby; and were very near it, Luke xxiv. 21. Although the matter be not so obvious to our conceptions and liking: yet really it is a greater mercy and advantage to us, that we have our glorified Mediator at the Father's right hand, than if we had him present with us upon the earth. It is more expedient for us, that he is where he is, than it would be to have him where we are. Poor distressed believers, they cry for ministers and Christians to pray with them, and for them: O if they had but one hour of Christ's bodily presence with them, and had him to pray for them, as he did for some when he was on earth, what heavenly consolation would it be to them? Take in by faith the comfort of his being in heaven, and his being as knowing and mindful of you, and as able to help, and that as speedily, as he was on earth, or could be, if he were now on earth with you.

7. *Lastly*, Our Lord's intercession in heaven, is a great and strong ground of confidence in coming to the throne of grace. This is in the context. This is the last ground of Paul's triumph of faith: Rom. viii. 33, 34. *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.* His faith begins at Christ's death, and riseth out of his grave with him, ascends up with him to the right hand of God, and concerns itself in his intercession there. Not unlike this rising and climbing of faith, is his account of the rising of grace on the vessels of grace, Eph. ii. 4, 5. They are *dead in sins* when grace finds them first. The first thing grace doth to them, is, to *quicken them with*

Christ, then *raising them up together*, then *setting them in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* All our life springs out of Christ's grave: John xii. 24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.* This heavenly grain, Jesus Christ, must be sown in the earth and die; and from the virtue of that death, all the life of grace and glory grows up in all its branches. He is indeed *the tree of life*, that now *groweth in the midst of the paradise of God*, Rev. ii. 7. And he is the glory of the place, and the eternal food of all the happy inhabitants thereof. But he was once dead in his grave; and grew out of that grave, up to all that glory and dignity that we shall one day be blessed with the beholding of, John xvii. 24. In this his glory in heaven, he intercedes for us. Intercession is a sort of praying, 1 Tim. ii. 1. *Supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks*, are commanded to *be made for all men.* We have one sad intercession, Rom. xi. 2. *Elias made intercession to God against Israel.* He was a severe prophet, and had severe service put into his hand. But our great Prophet and High Priest makes no intercession against his Israel, but all for them.

This intercession of Christ, which is so great a ground of boldness to us at the throne of grace, stands in these:

1*st*, In his appearing in heaven, in our nature, and in our name before God: Heb. ix. 24. *For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true*, (and those were the places the high priests of old entered into), *but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.* He is there, not only for himself, to reap the glorious fruit of his hard work on earth; but for his people, as their head and representative. All the church, the body, is now in heaven itself, because its head is there, Eph. ii. 5, 6. Christians, you are now *lying among the pots*, and defiled with the smoke and soot of this sinful world; you are sometimes *plunged in the ditch*, till *your own clothes abhor you*, as Job speaks, chap. ix. 31.; you cry out, *Wo is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar*, Psal. cxx. 5. Let faith say, "But where is my Lord and head? Is he not "in heaven? in that glory that I am not able now to bear a

"view of? And he is appearing there, as my nearest and "dearest friend. I am ashamed to look on myself, and my "loathsome deformity; I am afraid that so foul and spotted "a face as mine should be seen in heaven. But Christ is "there, and my Christ is there; and there he is to appear "for me, who must dread my personal appearance there, if it "were not for this appearance of my head for me."

2dly, Christ's intercession stands in this, That he, in our nature, and in our name, presents continually the savour of his sacrifice: Heb. ix. 12. *He went into the holy place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us.* Aaron, and his successors in the office of high priest, were appointed to offer the great sacrifice of yearly atonement at the altar, and with the blood thereof to enter into the holy of holies, and to sprinkle the mercy-seat (their throne of grace) with that blood, Lev. xvi. 14. Our Lord Jesus, the antitype, offered the sacrifice of himself in his death; and, in and with the virtue of that sacrifice, he entered heaven, to sprinkle the highest altar therewith. It is but a fond Popish fancy to think, that there do remain visible marks and signatures of his humbled state, on the glorified body of our Lord Jesus. That is indeed to *know Christ after the flesh*, in a bad sense, 2 Cor. v. 16. But his *entering with his own blood*, is spiritually to be understood; that Christ's appearance in heaven, is to bring up a memorial continually before God, of the virtue and savour of that sacrifice he offered without the gates of Jerusalem: Eph. v. 2. *Christ hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.* This savour never spends or wears out. The blood of Jesus, in the virtue of it, in the merit of it, and in the power of it, is as fresh this day, as in the day it was shed on the cross. He is still the new slain *way to the holiest of all*, Heb. x. 20. as fresh and fragrant as ever. If men by their unbelief account it old or stale, and to have lost its savour and virtue to themselves; and if they will seek for somewhat else to procure them acceptance in heaven; let them try, and perish; for none can help them that reject Christ. But our Lord presents nothing for the salvation of his body, the church, but his own blood; and nothing else is

accepted in heaven for this end, but that precious blood. And all they to whose conscience this blood is applied, and who come into it, and feel its virtue and power, will abhor all vain and dangerous mixtures of any thing with this sovereign balsam. It is always savoury in heaven; and it is always savoury to all them that are in the right way to heaven. Our Lord, in his intercession, fills heaven with the almighty and eternal savour of his blood; and heaven is filled with the praises of it, and of the shedder of it, Rev. v. 9,—12. If its savour do not fill the parts of the earth where it is preached, it is because men have lost, (or rather never had) the spiritual sense that only can take in this savour, and not because this blood is impaired in its virtue. But this is the sin and misery of this condemned world, that what is most savoury in heaven, is least savoured on earth; and what is most sought after, prized, and doated on in earth, is vanity and abomination in heaven, Luke xvi. 15.

3dly, In Christ's intercession, there is his knowledge of, and sympathy with the ailments and distresses of his people. This the apostle takes notice of in ver. 15. His knowledge of their distresses, we can more easily account for, than for his sympathy. His omniscience as God, we believe. Peter sweetly owned it, John xxi. 15, 16, 17. O that Christ would with power ask the same question at all of you, and that you could give the same answer! Christ's question is, *Lovest thou me more than these?* "Not long since thou saidst so, what "sayest thou now?" Peter's answer is, *Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.* And on the repeating of the question, Peter gives the same answer, ver. 16. When Christ a third time asked the same question, Peter was grieved, ver. 17. and answers, *Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.* As if he had said, "I dare not compare my love to "thee, with that of others to thee; thou hast reason to ques-"tion my love to thee, because of my late woful denial of "thee: but yet I dare call thee to witness, who knowest "all things, that I do love thee. Though all my brethren "love thee better than I do, or can; though I be more un-"worthy than any, to be loved by thee; yet I am sure I "love thee." If the love of Christ were as a hot fire within,

and its *coals were casting out a vehement flame*, as Song viii. 6. believers would more often call Christ by that sweet name, sweet to us to speak, and sweet to him to hear, *O thou whom my soul loveth*, Song i. 7. Miserable souls are they who love not Christ; and dull unobservant people are they that know not what, or whom their souls love. Is the love of Christ a mere notion? Is it not a most sensible, holy, and spiritual passion, or rather a heavenly grace! Can men love Christ, and not feel it? Should they feel it, and not avow it? Is there any thing we should be ashamed of in the love of Christ, but the shameful smallness of it? that our highest and hottest love is so unsuitable a return to his incomparable loveliness, and his wonderful love to us, and the dear demonstrations of it? All ye that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, look on him, and love him more; love him with all your souls, and blush with shame that ye love him no better. Blow the coals of love by faith, and let the flame mount up to heaven, and *ascend ye in the flame of the altar*, as Manoah's angel did, Judg. xiii. 20. You that doubt of your love to Christ, go to him, fall down before him; answer Peter's question, according to the true sense of your souls, and it will be, *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.* Love Christ, and ye will quickly feel ye love him. A sight of Christ will beget love, and love will quickly speak for itself, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

But for Christ's sympathy with his people, this is harder to conceive, than his knowledge of their distresses. It is a sympathy different from what he had in the days of his own infirmity. It is as tender, but not disturbing; as real, but not afflicting. It is inconsistent with his glorified state, to have any trouble. His sympathy itself is to be believed: the manner how it acts, is unsearchable: Heb. ii. 17. *In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God.* Heb. iv. 15. *He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* About this deep point of Christ's sympathy we may soberly conceive, 1. Our Lord's remembrance of his own infirmities, temptations, and afflictions in the days of

his flesh. This is plain and certain. 2. His sure and distinct particular knowledge and remembrance of his people, and of all that concerns them, within and without. 3. His interest in them, and care of them, and concern for them, as his members. 4. His power and wisdom as their head, to send down vital influences upon them, as their case requires, Eph. iv. 16. Col. ii. 19.

4thly, lastly, Christ's intercession stands in presenting his people, and their desires and wants, to the Father, for acceptance, and answers of peace. Both our persons and our prayers must be presented by this *great High Priest, set over the house of God,* Heb. x. 21. or no welcome, no acceptance. An Israelite, though he brought, might not offer the sacrifice on the altar; only the priest; and the high priest only must offer the great sacrifice for all Israel in the day of atonement. Christians must bring themselves, Rom. xii. 1. and all their spiritual sacrifices; but Christ must present them, and we only by him, Heb. xiii. 15. What a mighty encouragement is there in this for faith? Our High Priest makes another thing of our sacrifices than we can. Believers often know not rightly their own case; Christ knows it exactly. Many of our prayers are mere mistakes. We complain, when we should praise; we ask what would do us hurt, and are unwilling to receive what would do us much good. Our Lord Jesus puts all to rights. He can say over our prayers rightly, he can make good sense of them, can purge them of their faults, can spy out any thing of his own Spirit in them, and, lastly, adds his own incense to them, Rev. viii. 3. And thus are they accepted. We may best understand Christ's heart and work in intercession, by John xvii. wherein we find three.

(1.) Christ conceals all the faults and weakness of his people. Not a word of these in all that prayer, and they were guilty of a great many. (2.) He tells all their good, and makes much of it; ver. 6, 7, 8. *I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me: and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.* He knew, and reproved them for the weakness and staggering of their faith; he foretold an

approaching trial, and their fainting in it, John xvi. 31, 32.; yet he knew they were true believers; and he makes much of it in his prayer: as again, ver. 14, 25. (3.) Christ declares fully their necessity, and begs supply for them. No Christians needs any more than a full answer of this prayer of Christ; and it was put up for all his body, and will be answered as to every member of it. Whenever you are upon your knees at the footstool, remember who is at the throne above, and what his business is there. Footstool-supplications of believers would be all quite lost, if it were not for the Saviour's intercession at the throne, Heb. viii. 1. Our High Priest *is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.* And *he ever liveth to make intercession for us*, Heb. vii. 25. This is the end of his living in heaven, to make intercession for us. Take heed, and mind Christ much in your prayers; and never fear his forgetting you. Shall Christ live for ever to make intercession for you? and will you live all your days without making use of him as an intercessor? Alas! that Christ in heaven gets so little employment from believers on earth! He seeks your employment, he loves it, and loves them best that give him most of it. He undertakes for every thing put in his hand, and in due time will give you a good account of all you intrust him with, and make you say, *He hath done all things well*, Mark vii. 37.

Application. Is all the ground of confidence at the throne of grace, laid in Jesus Christ our High Priest? Build then your confidence on this safe and sure ground. Not only may you lawfully make use of Christ's mediation, but you must do it. It is not only a privilege the Lord allows you to make use of, but it is his command, and your duty to use it. You are commanded to come to the throne of grace, and commanded also to come in Christ's name, and to come boldly in this name. The neglect of either of these is sin. Not to come to the throne of grace when he calls, is a great sin. To come to it (or rather to pretend to come) in any other name but Christ's, is a great sin too. And to come in this name diffidently, is to reflect unworthily on Jesus Christ, and the power and virtue of his mighty name: John xiv. 13, 14. *Whatsoever ye*

shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it, Can a man desire a larger promise than this? Can one desire a stronger plea than Christ's name, and a better hand than his to have our answers from? Be ye askers, and askers in my name, I will be the doer. The Father's glory in the Son, and the Son's glory, is concerned in giving good answers to all prayers put up in Christ's name. You cannot honour and please Christ more, than in using his name confidently. All bills with Christ's name at them will be accepted at the throne of grace, and will surely be answered. But coming to the throne of grace in Christ's name, is another thing than commonly people take it to be. Some think it enough, that they conclude their prayers with the words Christ taught, Matth. vi. 9. but never for that use it is oft formally and superstitiously put to. Some think, that it is only to say in their prayers, *for Christ's sake.* To ask in his name, is a higher business, than to be reached by unbelievers, and men void of the Spirit of God. If *no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost,* 1 Cor. xii. 3.; if praying be required to be *in the Holy Ghost,* Jude, ver. 20.; if *praying always with all prayer and supplication,* should be *in the Spirit,* Eph. vi. 18.; *how shall men call on him in whom they have not believed?* Rom. x. 14. But can you take the searcher of hearts to witness, that you build all your hopes of acceptance at the throne of grace, in this name and mediation of Jesus? that you durst no more rush into God's awful presence, without the protection of this great name, than you durst leap into a devouring flame? Can ye say, "I have no "name to come to God in, but Christ's. My own name is abo- "minable to myself, and deservedly hateful in heaven. No "other name is given under heaven, but that of Jesus Christ, "in which a sinner may safely approach to God. Since the "Father is well pleased in this name, and the Son commands "me to use it, and the Holy Ghost hath broke this name to "me, and made *it as an ointment poured forth,* Song i. 3. and "since its savour hath reached my soul, I will try to lift it "up as incense to perfume the altar and throne above. Since "all that ever came in this name were made welcome, I will "come also; having no plea but Christ's name, no covering

"but his borrowed and gifted robe of righteousness. I need "nothing, I will ask nothing but what his blood hath bought, "(and all that I will ask); I will expect answers of peace "and acceptance, only in that blessed Beloved; beloved of "the Father, both as his Son and our Saviour; and beloved "of all that ever saw but a little of his saving grace and glory?"

Let such go and prosper. The Lord is with you, the Lord is before you. He will welcome the Mediator in his *bringing you to him*, 1 Peter iii. 18. and welcome you with salvation, who come in his name for it. The prodigal's welcome, Luke xv. is but a shadow of what ye shall meet with. Christ welcomes dearly all that come to him; and the Father welcomes the believer that cometh in Christ's name, and is brought in Christ's hand, to this throne.

SERMON VI.

Heb. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

FROM this text, I have already spoken to three of the things I did take up in it.

1. Unto *the throne of grace* itself, that is erected for, and revealed to sinners in the gospel; that new court of grace, which the Lord invites the fallen seed of Adam to come unto.

2. I have spoke to that *boldness* that is allowed and commanded in coming to it. We are not only allowed to come, but we must come, or perish, and bring the guilt of our own souls blood upon our heads, by refusing, Acts xviii. 6. We not only may come and try, but we may and must *come boldly* and confidently, expecting to speed in our coming.

3. I have spoke to the great ground of this confidence, couched in the word *therefore*, in the text, and relating to ver. 14, 15. Were it not for Christ's place, and business, and heart in heaven, no man on earth could have boldness at the throne of grace.

HEAD IV. The fourth and last thing in the verse, is, *the end we should come for, and the great blessings we may receive by coming;* expressed in two words, *that we may obtain mercy,* and *find grace to help in time of need.* God's mercy and grace are the most comprising, comprehensive blessings; and these expressions of them contain all that is needful for our happiness. Nothing can be added to them; no blessing but is in them; no blessing is without them. It is the common apostolic prayer, (and such prayers made by the penmen of the holy scripture, under the immediate guidance of the Holy Ghost, are equivalent to divine promises, yea are such), *Grace be to you;* sometimes, *Grace, mercy, and peace be to you.* So that these words, as they stand in the text, do equally answer these two inquiries:—

1. *What good things shall we get at the throne of grace?* The Spirit of God answers, You may, and shall *obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* And are not these well worth coming for? are they any where else to be had? And here they may surely be found. How should this endear the throne of grace to us, and engage to coming to it?

2. *Wherefore should we come? with what design? what end should be in our eye?* Come, saith the Spirit, by the apostle's pen, that ye may *obtain* the one, and *find* the other. Come, that you may get both. Design this getting in your coming.

I would first speak of *our coming, that we may obtain mercy;* and on it discourse of these three things:

I. Of the mercy that is to be got at the throne of grace.

II. Of the import of the phrase, *obtaining of mercy.*

III. Of the duty required of coming with this design, *that we may obtain this mercy.*

I. I shall discourse *of the mercy that is to be obtained at the throne of grace.* You see that it is only mercy that is named, without any mention made, whose mercy it is, or of what sort it is. But when miserable sinners are invited to come to God's throne of grace for mercy, it may be easily known whose it is, and what it is. It is God's mercy in Jesus Christ, who is the mercy-seat, or throne of grace. It is not angel-

mercy, or creature-mercy; but God's mercy. And who can tell what a great and vast thing his mercy is? Mercy, in the proper notion of it, is a kind, relieving, compassion to the miserable. The object of mercy, is a miserable creature. Divine goodness shines in giving being to nothing, and in creating all things; wisdom, in ordering them, and guiding them to his glory; justice, in disposing of them according to his will, the essential rule of righteousness. But mercy hath no fit object, till misery appear for mercy to act on. The shewer of mercy is a compassionate person; its nature and end is, to relieve the miserable. Mercy with God is another sort of mercy than what is required of, and can be practised by creatures. We may, and should have compassion on the miserable, whom we are not able nor allowed to relieve. The judge that condemns the criminal, should do it with mercy and compassion; but he breaks the law, if he suffer his mercy to delay or divert a righteous sentence and execution. But the Lord's mercy is not only tenderness and compassion in his own heart, (so we borrow words, by the pattern of sound words in the scripture, to speak of God after the manner of men), but it is always relieving to the person on whom it is bestowed. Let the misery be never so great, and of what kind soever it be; whoever they be that are the objects of his mercy, they are certainly relieved thereby. There is no redemption out of the pit, though their misery that are there is the greatest. Why? Because there is no mercy for them. If it were possible that God's mercy in Christ could enter into hell itself, (as it falls on many very near to it,) that mercy would bring them out. But the door of mercy is quite shut upon them; and the Lord hath resolved and declared, that his mercy shall never visit them.

That we may the better understand what this mercy of God is, the getting whereof we should make our great errand to the throne of grace, it will be needful to consider that misery in men that renders them needy of this mercy.

And this I would consider, as it actually lies on them, and is incumbent; or as it is coming on them, and imminent.

1. The misery that all natural men lie under. It is true, they do not see it, nor feel it; but this makes not their misery

the less, but the greater. For insensibleness of misery, especially where it is removable, and when this insensibleness is a hindrance of using the right means of removing it, is a great plague, and an aggravation of the misery. I shall give you a few scripture-accounts of this misery.

1*st*, The misery of a natural man, and of all natural men, is, that they are utterly destitute of all true good: *In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing*, Rom. vii. 18. Must it not be so much more with them that are *flesh*, and *in the flesh*, and have nothing in them but *flesh?* the first notion we have of misery is this, that it stands in a deprivation of good. And the greater that deprivation be, and the more good things a man is deprived and destitute of, the more miserable we count the person to be. He is a miserable man that is blind; because the light of the world is so pleasant and useful, and the eye simply needful to behold and use it. It is a great addition to this man's misery, if he be dumb also; because the tongue is a man's glory, and the organ of expressing our thoughts, and of communion with our own kind. The misery is yet farther heightened, if a man be also deaf; for the ear is the door of knowledge, both of things natural and divine. If you go to the inward senses or powers; if a man be deprived of those, his misery is yet greater; as it is a greater misery to be void of understanding and memory, to be an idiot, (an innocent, as we call them), than it is to be deprived of any of the bodily senses. Now, if one wanted all the senses of the body, and powers of the soul (if such a creature should be called a man), would we not account this a most miserable creature? But if there be yet somewhat better than all these, surely then he that is altogether void of that, must be more miserable still. That there is somewhat better than all these good gifts of body and mind, and that every man by nature is without it, is most manifest in the word. To be *without God, without Christ, without hope*, Eph. ii. 12. is more and worse, than to be without any, or all outward good things. This destitute state is expressed by our Lord, Rev. iii. 17. *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* What a great difference is there

betwixt Christ's, and their opinion of their state? And mus not Christ's be right and true, and theirs false if it contradic his? Were they any thing the less miserable; were they no rather much more so, that they so misjudged? Our Lord ag gravates both their sin and misery from their ignorance, *Be cause thou knowest not.* Spiritual blessings are of that nature that all are miserable indeed that are without them; but n man is sensibly miserable, till he seeth that he is without them It is the knowledge of this want that brings in the sense o misery: as every unpardoned sinner is a miserable man; bu he never counts himself miserable, till he feel the weight o sin, and see the want of pardon.

2dly, Every natural man is needy of God's mercy, becaus he is a condemned man. A condemned man, is a dead man in law. As *there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus*, Rom. viii. 1.; so there is nothing but condemnation to all that are not in him: John iii. 18, 36. *He that believeth not, is condemned already;* and *the wrath of God abideth on him.* You may have seen and heard, how malefactors will cry for mercy from the judge, when he cannot, and ought not to pity them, so as to spare them: when they are bid hold up their hand at the bar to receive their doom, how earnestly on their knees, with tears, they will cry, *Mercy, my lord, mercy for God's sake.* Every natural man is condemned. But how few of their consciences can witness for them, that they ever sought God's mercy? so as convicted criminals an earthly judge's mercy? The mercy they beg is small, in regard of what sinners stand in need of from God. An earthly judge may reprieve or pardon to-day, and the pardoned man may die tomorrow. But if the great Judge condemn you, and you are not pardoned, you are sentenced to a never-dying misery. Prisoners beg mercy of a man, who, may be, is bound up by law, and conscience of his oath, to shew none, but to execute justice. Here the case is just contrary. The Lord bids men beg his mercy, and condemns them only that despise it. We have his command, and promise, and many acts of pardon, for our encouragement. What pleading for pardon would there be at earthly bars, if they had the judge's command to ask, his promise to grant it, and his hand and seal to that pro-

mise? Such is our case; yet few beg it in good earnest. Be ashamed, and convinced of your sin, when you see men begging a frail, short life of a judge; and say, "Alas! I never "begged the mercy of eternal life so earnestly at the throne "of grace, as these wretches do a frail, short, uncertain life."

3dly, The natural man hath all the creation against him, and therefore is needy of God's mercy. The whole creation groans under him; he is a burden to God's earth, a plague to the creation, Rom. viii. 20, 21, 22. What a noise do men make, and what pains do they take, to heap up dust? If God prosper their endeavours, they think he blesseth them, and count themselves happy in their enjoyment. But what is all this for, to a natural unrenewed man? All these creature-comforts will be but as so many witnesses against them in the day of the Lord, James v. 1,—4. Men seek the creatures to satisfy their carnal desires, and supply their outward wants; but they do not remember, that, unless the special saving mercy of God come along with them, the creatures are abused, and, in their way, witness and groan to God against them. They groan to be put in God's room in mens hearts, and to be made fuel for mens lusts. They all wait but for God's call to execute vengeance on his enemies. Is not such a man needy of God's mercy, that hath the whole creation of God at war with him?

4thly, But there is worse than all these: The man himself, and all he is, hath, and doth, is under the curse of God, Gal. iii. 10. What is the curse? It is the malediction of God, on a man: it is God's devoting him to ruin. He is cursed in his body, cursed in his soul, cursed in his family, cursed in his trade and estate, cursed in his crosses, cursed in his mercies, cursed in his life, and cursed in his death; cursed in time, and cursed to eternity. Ah, how long and broad is this curse! Zech. v. 2, 3, 4. O what need is there of God's mercy! for it is this mercy only that can take away the curse. There is no evil we are in danger of from an angry God, but must be removed or prevented by the opposite good from a reconciled God. If God's anger be our plague, nothing can remove it but his love. If his curse be our burden, only his blessing can take it away. The whole creation cannot make up the

loss God's favour. And this they know well, that ever saw the face of an angry God.

So much of the necessity of God's mercy, from the present misery of natural men.

2. I might proceed to speak of that which is coming on them, without the intervening of this mercy of God. We do not reckon a man miserable only, on the account of what he feels, but also on that of his just fears. And generally the smart of misery is raised from fear, rather, and more than from feeling. If any thing renders a man's present state miserable, the apprehension of the duration or increase of what he feels, adds greatly to his misery. Many things would be little complained of as great evils, were a man sure that in a moment they shall be removed. But in a sinner's case, for as bad as it is at present, it will surely be worse with him shortly, if mercy prevent not. There is certainty of its coming, and an eternal duration of it when it comes. It is called *the wrath to come*, 1 Thess. i. 10. Nothing like it ever came on them. Present wrath, though dreadful, is but a trifle to that that is to come. It is *wrath to come*; for it will surely come. As surely as God lives, as surely as God is true in his word of threatening, this wrath will come on the world of the ungodly. There is no putting of this evil day far away, but in vain thoughts; no diverting or keeping it back a moment. All the united force of the rebellious part of the creation will not be able to stem or stop this fearful tide of wrath. It is *wrath to come;* for it is still coming and approaching. As many days and years as an ungodly sinner counts in his life, as many days and years journeys hath God's wrath made towards him. Think on this, old sinners; God's wrath and you are near to meet, except mercy interpose. You think that you run from it, but it runs after you. It will *come upon you, and pursue you, and overtake you*, as Deut. xxviii. 45. It is *wrath to come;* because it is always a-coming, and never past. The tide of God's wrath on the damned is an eternal flood; there will never be an ebbing. Look down to hell, and see how they fare there. Alas! men will not believe, and fear, and fly; and therefore must feel. How many daily hear of this *wrath to come*, and yet never have any fear of it, till they be irreco-

verably plunged into it? who never awaken out of the sleep of security, till they are awakened by the flashes of hell-fire? who will never believe God's wrath, till they feel it? No true believer goes to hell; all unbelievers are sent thither: but as soon as they come there, they become woful believers, because eternal feelers of this wrath to come.

Mens danger of this dreadful state, should make them cry mightily for God's mercy, as it renders them unspeakably needy of it. But your own serious thoughts about it, would do you more good than many words can.

II. The second thing proposed, is, *What is the obtaining of mercy?* A frequent manner of speech in scripture: 1 Tim. i. 13. *Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy.* 1 Pet. ii. 10. *Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

This phrase of *obtaining mercy* speaks forth,

1. That the mercy is God's gift. Our obtaining, is the fruit of his giving. *I obtained mercy*, saith Paul, and may every believer say. How so? He *gave* it; he *shewed*, he *demonstrated* it, as 1 Tim. i. 16. It is the Lord's shewing it, tendering, and giving of it, that is the only spring of our obtaining it. We do not buy it, we do not work it out, we are no way meet for it but by misery. God's mercy springs not out of the earth, but comes down from heaven. It is the gift of God: and as such must all seek it, that would obtain it; and as such will all eternally own it, that do obtain it.

2. This phrase speaks forth a particular application of mercy to the receiver by the giver of it. *I obtained mercy*, saith Paul. "General mercy would not do my business, "another man's mercy would not save me; I must have it of "my own, for myself; and so I got it. Mercy came to me, "made me a visit, and applied itself to me in particular." So must it be with you. You will never be saved, you shall never see God's face in glory, unless his mercy deal with you, and apply itself as particularly to you, as if there were no other person in the world to be saved by mercy besides thyself. There is indeed a blessed multitude of the vessels of mercy,

and the *Captain of our salvation brings many sons to glory*, Heb. ii. 10. But yet there is a personal particular application of saving mercy to every saved sinner. And for this application of mercy, we should come to the throne of grace. Though there be infinite mercy at his throne, and though many receive of this mercy; yet you must have of this mercy for yourselves, or you cannot be saved. Your soul is your own, and no man's else; your danger, sin, and misery, is your own, and no man's else; and the mercy that saves you, must be as much your own, and not another body's mercy. That deep discourse of the apostle looks this way, Rom. xi. 30, 31, 32. *For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.* It is a great mystery of judgment and mercy the apostle is speaking of; the rejecting of the Jews, and calling in of the Gentiles. Mercy took occasion, from the just casting off of the Jews, to visit the Gentiles; and will in due time bestow itself again upon the Jews. But both of them must have mercy of their own. Mercy to the Jews will not save the Gentiles; mercy to the Gentiles will not save the Jews. Both must have their own mercy. The fountain is the same, the streams are the same; but the vessels are not the same, and every vessel of mercy must have its own measure of its own particular mercy. So must it be with you, if you be saved by mercy. It must be your own, and no man's else.

3. *Obtaining of mercy*, speaks forth the receivers possessing of it. Obtained mercy, is not only bestowed and applied mercy, but it is possessed mercy. Such things as cannot be possessed and kept, are worth little pains in seeking. But God's mercy is well worth the seeking; because it may be both had by seeking, and kept when obtained, and is unspeakably beneficial when enjoyed: Psal. ciii. 17. *The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him.* As if the Psalmist had said, "Man is but a flower; his life is a "wind and vapour that quickly and surely passeth away. "But it is not so with God's mercy; it eternally abides on

it falls upon." O that men would think on this! As lives, and is true in his word, God's everlasting mercy, od's everlasting wrath, will eternally lie upon every one ou. And what an amazing difference is there betwixt two! And yet how many behave, as if indifferent h of these two shall be upon them? God's saving y is such a jewel, that though the Lord gives it but w, yet he will never take it away from any he hath given , Psal. lxxxix. 28,—33. Believers, God may take any from you, but his mercy; and you may spare any , but his mercy. If God come to take away your chil- give them; if he come to take away your estate, let have it; if he come to take away your health and yield them; strive not with him; bless a giving, and a taking God. If he crave thy right eye, or right hand, what is dearest to you, give, yield all to him. But say, t me only keep thy mercy; I cannot part with that, is the only thing I cannot spare." The blessed Ca- ite's striving with Christ was about his mercy: "Be ent, disown, reproach me, I care not; but thy mercy must have." It were a cruelty that only unbelief can ge God sinfully with, to take away so precious a gift ving mercy is. Let but this *mercy follow me*, as Psalm 6. and it is no great matter where I go. If I be e lowest hell, mercy will bring me out: Psal. lxxxvi. 13. *great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my from the lowest hell.* There is no time-hell that a vessel ercy can be in, but mercy will bring him out again; this mercy will secure him from the eternal hell. This y is God's mercy; therefore sovereignly free, therefore ghty, therefore eternal. You sin, believers, when you his taking away his mercy. He gave it at first, that might be eternally possessed of it. Mercy gave mercy, mercy will keep mercy, and mercy will stay with you, keep you for ever.

I. The third thing to be spoke to, is, *the end and design ning to the throne of grace;* and that is, *that we may obtain y.* Not only that this mercy is to be got at the throne

of grace, and there only; nor that this throne of grace is erected on purpose to dispense this mercy; nor is it only that we should come to the throne of grace, to ask and beg this mercy; but that we should come to obtain it. This is the duty exhorted to in the text. And in the setting about this duty, two things are required.

1. Come as sensible of your need of mercy. No man can come truly without this sense. He that hath no sense of misery, compliments God in asking mercy, and takes this saving name of God in vain. It is dreadful to provoke God to wrath in our way of asking his mercy: and all such contract this guilt, and expose themselves to his wrath, that have no heart-sense of their need of this mercy. It is an amazing stupidity that the power of sin hath brought on men, that, in a world of sinners sinking into everlasting misery, so few are really sensible of their need of saving mercy. And no man is sensible, till God by his grace make him so.

2. Come in faith of his mercy. You cannot come at all without this faith. Faith is *coming to God*, Heb. xi. 6. Unbelief is *departing from the living God*, Heb. iii. 12. No man can come, but he that is sensible of misery; for coming is the act of a man drawn and moved *by the cords of a man*. No man can come but in faith; for there is no other coming for a Christian. These three things should be in this faith:—

1*st*, A believing that there is abundance of mercy with the Lord; which if shewed and put forth to you, and on you would save you abundantly. So argues the prodigal, Luke xv. 17, 18. *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise, and go to my father, and say*, &c. Psalm cxxx. 7. *Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.* The highest working of unbelief is, when men judge their misery greater than his mercy: the great work of faith is, to get these two to meet fairly: and mercy will surely prevail. His tender *mercy is over all his works*; much more is his abundant mercy above a sinner's misery. Cain's wor

should be left for himself, and used by none else, Gen. iv. 13. *And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear;* or, *My iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven:* words sounding like the language of hell, and not to be spoken by any that would escape it. I know many secure people find no difficulty in that they count believing of this, that there is mercy enough with the Lord. But yet the matter is far otherwise. It is mighty difficult to believe the abundance of his mercy, when men are in great pressures of misery. The best of saints have sometimes stumbled here. When Moses is pleading with the Lord for mercy to Israel, Numb. xiv. 17, 19. *And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken. And pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, according unto the greatness of thy mercy.* As if Moses had said, "Lord thou hast proclaimed thy name, "and I heard it, and believed it; but I did not think, that "their wickedness would have been so great, as now I find it "to be." Was not Moses a great believer? yet he stumbled in this point of the power of God's mercy, Numb. xi. 18,—23. Israel murmureth for flesh, God promiseth a whole month's diet of it. What saith Moses, ver. 21, 22.? How doth the Lord answer him? ver. 23. *And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see now, whether my word shall come to pass unto thee, or not.* This great man's unbelief was greatly aggravated, in that he saw the Lord bring that people out of Egypt, with signs and wonders, and with a mighty hand; he saw them daily fed, clothed, and led, and protected with miracles of divine power and mercy: yet one new difficulty shakes his faith. When Paul gives us his last account of his faith, (for that epistle was his last writing), he lodgeth his faith on Divine power: 2 Tim. i. 12. *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.* "If I be persuaded that he is able, I "shall not doubt of his being willing to keep that charge safe "I have committed to him." Let the eye of faith take up clearly the power of mercy; and the faith of its application to thy benefit, will be the more easy. But he is a rare believer, whose view of the power of mercy is not darkened

by a clear sight and deep sense of his own great misery, at least at sometimes.

2dly, To come for mercy in faith, is to believe the fitness and suitableness of God's mercy to our misery. Here many stumble wofully. Their question is, "Am I fit for mercy?" when it should rather be, "Is his mercy fit for me?" And this question every sensible soul can answer; the other none in heaven or earth can answer. If any man think himself fit for mercy, of all men, that man is most unfit for it, and farthest from receiving of it. But every sensible soul will say, "Though I be unfit for, and unworthy of mercy; yet "mercy is very fit for me. Is there pardoning mercy with "God? who is it so fit for as a guilty vile sinner? Is there "saving mercy with him? who is it so fit for as for a lost "man, as I am?" Come to the throne of grace for mercy, in faith of this, "Mercy is fit for me exactly, though I be "utterly unworthy of it." They that think they are fit for mercy, will never get it, nor indeed can ask it. But they that think they are needy of it, and that it is fit for them, will both ask it and get it.

3dly, To come to the throne of grace in faith for mercy, is, to believe that there is all good-will in him that sits on this throne to give and shew mercy. It is implied in the text, *Let us come to obtain mercy*. But what if, when we come, he will not shew mercy? That is an ungodly supposition, mischievous to ourselves, and reflecting upon God. He hath mercy in abundance to give; he delights in giving, he never refused mercy to any that came for it, he hath promised he never will: and why should men harbour such a suspicion, that we may come and not obtain? Benhadad could adventure on a report, that the kings of Israel were merciful kings; and yet Ahab was one of the worst of them, 1 Kings xx. 31. And shall not sinners come upon a more sure report of the mercifulness of the King on this throne of grace? It is on this truth of the Lord's good-will to shew mercy that our faith so readily halts. Many think they ought not to believe this good-will to shew mercy. I would have you consider some instances of Christ's dealing with sinners. John iv. 10. *Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God,*

and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink: thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. Where we are to regard, 1. To whom these words were spoken by our Lord: To a Samaritan; a vile creature, as to the former course of her life; a blind, ignorant, sottish sinner, that was guilty of refusing Christ a cup of water, the greatest sin she ever committed in her life. 2. What our Lord saith to her: *If thou knewest me, thou wouldest have asked; if thou hadst asked, I would have given thee living water.* And before he had done he made her know him; made her ask, and gave her of his living water. But that I mainly observe from the word of Christ, is a truth, which few will believe when they hear it, even few believers themselves will believe it as they ought, That Christ is more ready to give begging sinners eternal life, than they can be to give Christ himself a cup of cold water. Our Lord saith it, but men will not believe it. Another of Christ's words is in Luke xi. 13. *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* Christ makes the comparison favourably, ver. 11, 12. of a child's asking necessaries; will a parent refuse that desire, and give what is hurtful? But consider our Lord's design in this saying. It is plainly to encourage to seeking. And the argument he useth, is from the greater love and readiness in God to give the best things, than earthly parents have to give their children the necessaries of this life. The preference is not here given to God's greater riches and fulness, than that of parents, who may have their children beg of them what they have not to give, as in Lam. iv. 4.; but it is a preference given to God's greater willingness to give. Now, who believes this, and makes the just application to his own case? and says confidently, "The Lord is much more willing to give me "saving mercy, if I ask it, than I am to give a bit of bread "to maintain the life of the nearest and dearest relation I "have in the world?"

Application. I shall only add a few words of application. 1. There is no principle of natural religion engraven more

deeply on the hearts of men, than that there is misery in men, and mercy in God; and that God's mercy only can relieve men under this misery. This runs through the whole world in all ages; and will continue as long as sense of misery is in men, and any notions of God are preserved in the minds of men. And these sentiments are not to be defaced. Attempts of atheists are damnable to themselves, but vain efforts against the Rock of ages.

2. Notwithstanding of this, God's true mercy in Jesus Christ is the greatest riddle, offence, and stumbling-block, to all natural men. God's mercy they like well enough, and would have applied to their own relief under misery; but God's only and true mercy in Christ, they cannot away with. That there is no mercy with God for sinners, but what flows through the blood of Jesus Christ; that God's love should appear in sending his own Son, under the charge of mens sin, and under the smart and feeling of their miseries; that as God shews mercy only this way, so men that would have it, must only seek it this way; the world never did, never can, never will understand, nor relish it, nor betake themselves to it. They would have mercy to come to them another way; and so seek it, and look for it in vain, and perish by the miss of it.

3. There is no address made to God, more honourable to God, more acceptable to him, and more becoming a miserable sinner, than an address to God for his mercy. It is his glory to be the sovereign Lord of mercy; it is his honour to be attended with the addresses of miserable men; it is his delight to dispense mercy to the addressors. What is more becoming God, than to shew mercy? and what can be more fit, than that a miserable sinner should beg his mercy?

4. There is no provocation more common, than sinful ways of begging God's mercy. I shall briefly instance in a few. Many profane careless creatures have this word frequently in their mouths, *God be merciful to me;* who yet have no more sense, either of God or of themselves, of his mercy or of their misery, than the ground they go on. This is a gross taking of God's name in vain. Undue addresses to God for mercy, are great provocations. Some beg only outward mercies,

Such people would like this text well, if it had been, "Let "us come that we may obtain gold, and silver, and health, "and long life." If prayer was ordained by God for such mercies, the throne of grace would be crowded with supplicants. But you will never ply prayer rightly, till you understand that there is something to be got at this throne of grace, that is better in itself, more needful for you, and that will do you more good, than all that the world hath to give. Some beg mercy only when they are under God's afflicting hand: Psal. lxxviii. 34. *When he slew them, then they sought him.* Some beg God's mercy limitedly; they only beg one mercy, and desire no more. His mercy is of a large extent, and we should beg it all. We may beg a particular mercy, according to our present felt necessities; yet we must not make an exception against any act of mercy. We must not beg the mercy of pardon, with a heart-quarrel against the mercy of sanctification. *The Lord be merciful to thy servant in this thing,* 2 Kings v. 18. was a faulty prayer, if there was any sincerity in Naaman. Though we may ask any particular mercy, yet we must lay open our hearts to the whole flood of mercy: Psalm cxix. 132. *Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.* So Psalm cvi. 4, 5. Lastly, some beg mercy for themselves, and for their idols in the same address. One part of their prayer is for mercy to themselves, and another part of it is for mercy to their idols. Is not that a woful, ill-made prayer? and yet how frequently is it done? Idols are such things as have a greater, nearer room in the heart, than God hath. Whatever is loved, feared, trusted, and delighted in, more than God, that is an idol, be it the best or basest thing we can name, or think on. These idols are of two sorts; lawful, and unlawful. Not that it is lawful to have any idol; but many make idols of lawful things: such things I mean, that in their proper place may be sought, and lawfully used; but are wofully abased, when put in God's room. These are the most dangerous, because least perceived idols. Christian, it is lawful to love thy relations, to pray for wife and children, to beg God's blessing on thy lawful diligence in thy calling: but watch well, that none of these lawful things come in between thy heart and God. If they do, thou wilt fall into this

snare, of begging God's mercy to thyself and idols in the same prayer. Unlawful idols, or idols in unlawful things, are, sins, lusts, and heart-plagues. Woe to him that begs God's mercy to them. We should daily beg God's mercy against them. The more mercy (that is, forbearance) God sheweth to such idols, the more wrath, and the less mercy, he sheweth to the man himself. God's mercy cannot be shewn both to a man and his idols. The purest mercy is then shewn to a man, when the Lord dealeth severely with his idols. *Kill my sinful idols, and save me*, is a fit prayer at the throne of grace; and he is a happy man that gets it answered.

5. Sinful addresses for God's mercy, are great provocations of his wrath. His mercy is so sacred a name of God, that he will hold no man guiltless that taketh it in vain. In this matter the best contract much guilt. All have many sins in their holy things, and in their approaches to the holiest of all, the throne of grace, and do stand in need of atonement. And we should all come to the throne of grace, for mercy to pardon the sins that are in our seeking of mercy. But where then shall the ungodly and sinner appear? He perisheth for want of mercy. He should come for it; and he cannot come for mercy, while he is what he is, but he provokes the Lord to more wrath against him. This is one of the inextricable straits that every unbeliever is in, that nothing but sovereign grace and mercy can bring one out of. Look to him for this deliverance, and he will shew you mercy.

SERMON VII.

HEB. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

THE last thing in this verse is, *What is to be had at the throne of grace, and what we should come for?* And that is *mercy* and *grace;* and we need no more. And we should come that *we may obtain and find them:* and we should, in our coming, design no less.

Of the first I began to speak last day, and did open these three things:—

1. What is this mercy we should come for? It is God's saving mercy in Christ, suitable unto, and for relieving of that misery that every natural man is perishing under. Mercy in God, and misery in man, are relatives; and happy is that person that hath them well married and matched together.

2. What is in this phrase, *obtaining of mercy?* I told you, that it implied three things. 1. That mercy is God's free gift. We only come by it, because he gives it. 2. That there is a personal particular application of this mercy to the obtainer of it. 3. That it is given as a possession; not as a gift that may be recalled and retaken; but it is given for an everlasting possession. Whoever is made partaker of God's special saving mercy, it shall never be taken from him. It shall never waste, nor spend, nor wear out; but shall stay with him, follow him, and grow up with him to eternity. The burden of that heaven-like song, Psal. cxxxvi. is six and twenty times repeated. *For his mercy endureth for ever.* How sweetly will it be sung from all the mansions in heaven, and by all the blessed dwellers in them! *O give thanks to our God; for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever.* Can you *learn this song?* as the word is, Rev. xiv. 3. Only *the redeemed of the Lord* can *say so;* but all they should say so, Psalm cvii. 1, 2. His mercy is most sweet; a crumb of it will save a starving soul, as Matt. xv. 27. A large measure of it on earth, is a heaven. But the eternity of this mercy, is the mercy of this mercy. Time-mercies in regard of this, are no mercies.

3. I spoke of the design and end we should have before us in coming to the throne of grace: *Come that we may obtain mercy.*

That which I would do at this exercise, is to apply this truth. And the Lord apply both doctrine and application. And,

First, I would put this question to your consciences, and let them speak as in God's sight, *Whether have ye obtained mercy, or not?* Can you say with Paul, *But I obtained mercy?* You must have it as well as he, and may know it as really as

he did; though ye receive not so much, nor know it so clearly, as so great a believer as Paul did. See to get your consciences well resolved in this main case, that you may be able to give a peremptory answer. The importance of this question is very obvious. Can a man retire within, and look up to God, and consider this, "I am a miserable sinner in myself, "as all are; nothing but God's special mercy can relieve "me;" and not think it a matter of vast consequence to know whether he hath obtained this mercy or no? Woe to them that never asked the question; and they are but in a sorry case that cannot answer it.

I would propose a few things to inforce the duty of trying yourselves in this matter.

1. It is mercy you have been seeking. If ever you made any fashion of prayer, surely it was mercy you sought. Most of you, if not all, pray at least sometimes. Now, whenever you pray, unless you be wofully formal and stupid, your consciences must tell you, it is mercy you seek. Have you long and often begged God's mercy? and will ye never inquire whether or not you have got it? None ask in earnest, but they will try how they speed. There is no surer and plainer argument of trifling in prayer, than when men are careless what they get by prayer. We would be called of *the generation of them that seek God's face:* and shall we not inquire if we have found him? Our Lord bids us ask, that we may receive; and shall we ask, and not think of receiving? nor try if we have received?

2. A great many round you have obtained mercy; therefore it becomes you to inquire, whether you have obtained it. If the mercy of God were so very rarely dispensed, that none, if any, in an age, did partake of it, this neglect would be a little more excuseable. But when mercy falls round about thee; when one on thy right hand obtains mercy, and another on thy left hand obtains mercy; when this mercy falls on some of the family thou livest in, on some of the congregation thou hearest in; when this mercy falls on one that hath the same natural parents that thou hast; will none of these things make you ask, *Have I also obtained mercy?* We find our Lord aggravating the misery of the damned, by their

seeing of the blessedness of the saved, Luke xiii. 28. *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.* A most dreadful passage! Christ is telling men that were to be excluded from heaven, what they would think, say, and do, in that dismal case. Prevent this misery in time, by inquiring whether you have obtained mercy: and do so the rather, that ye may see others partaking of this mercy. When you see the saving mercy of God sought and obtained by others, it should provoke you greatly; not to envy them their share, but to desire a share of your own; for there is enough, and to spare. And the Lord doth shew mercy to some, on purpose that he may encourage others to come, and ask, and obtain. So Paul tells wherefore he got his mercy: 1 Tim. i. 16. *Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first (or the chief) Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.* There were other ends Christ had in shewing mercy to Paul. The Lord shewed him mercy, that he might be saved eternally; he shewed him mercy, that he might be *an able minister of the New Testament*, 2 Cor. iii. 6. and a successful apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 10.; and the church of Christ hath good cause now, for may ages, to bless our Lord Jesus for that rich mercy which that chosen vessel obtained, and was filled with. But the apostle, in that place, takes notice of another design of Christ's in his mercy to him; and that was, to set up Paul as a pattern and copy of the freedom, riches, and power of saving mercy. And Christ can, when he will, write another copy, like Paul; and somewhat like it he doth in all that he calls savingly, Eph. ii. 4. Take in this argument, "Many obtain mercy; and why "not I? None deserve it; yet many have it. None deserve "it less, and need it more than I; why then not I?" If you see the Lord shewing mercy to others, and you care not for mercy to yourselves; how can you expect it, or think you have got it?

3. Inquire whether you have received God's saving mercy; because this mercy is brought so near you, that it must either be received or refused. There is no midst. No man doth

neither, no man doth both. All that have the offer of God's saving mercy in the gospel, do and must necessarily either receive or reject it. This should make people inquire the more narrowly, whether they have obtained mercy. If ye have not obtained it, ye have refused it: Acts xiii. 46. *It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.* This last is a strange phrase. I am persuaded in the Lord, that no man shall ever get everlasting life, that thinks himself worthy of it. It is always to be sought by us, always given by the Lord, and always taken by the receivers of it, as an alms of grace for Christ's sake. Nothing surely was farther from Paul's mind, than to have these foolish Jews to count themselves deserving of eternal life; or that, on the account either of their privileges or works, they did or could deserve salvation at the hand of God. But all the apostle meant, was this:—"Everlasting life is brought "near to you in this word of the gospel: you put the word "from you; thereby you declare, you are unwilling to receive "everlasting life, and God counts you unworthy of the offer "of it; and we will carry it to others;" as he tells other unbelieving Jews at Rome, Acts xxviii. 28. *Be it known to you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.*

Now, for resolving of this question, Whether you have obtained special saving mercy, or not? this seems easily determinable. There is so great a difference betwixt that state of sin and misery that mercy finds men in when it first visits them, and that state that mercy brings them to, that we are apt to think the change may be easily known. See Eph. ii. 1,—18. Yet there are so many things that obstruct, both them that have obtained mercy, from owning it, and them that have not obtained it, from acknowledging their want of it, (of which I shall not now speak), that searching is needful. And for your help in that work, I offer these few plain marks.

1. A high value of special saving mercy above common mercy, is a good sign of one that hath obtained saving mercy. There is a special mercy of God, and there is a common mercy. Special mercy is saving; it comes from the heart and

love of God, Eph. ii. 4. and is treasured up for, and laid out only upon his chosen. It is *the favour he bears to his people*, Psal. cvi. 4. Common mercies are thrown about with a large and indifferent hand: *He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust*, Matth. v. 45. Now, these two sorts of mercies are as far different, as heaven and earth. The excellency of the one is far beyond that of the other, though we be unworthy of either. *I am less than the least of all thy mercies*, said a great saint, Gen. xxxii. 10.; and so should all say. But few do perceive this great difference; and many give the preference to common outward mercy. Who but a Christian doth count it a greater mercy to have the conscience sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, than to have a large and prosperous estate in the world? that the light of God's countenance, and an hour spent in his courts, (when the King's presence is in them), is better than all the enjoyments of this world? Moses was a man that obtained singular mercy from the Lord. It appeared in this, that he *esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt*, Heb. xi. 26. He had excellent balances and true weights. He put in the one scale, Egypt's honours, treasures, and pleasures, (and how weighty are such things in the worldling's balances!); and in the other, *the reproach of Christ*, and *affliction with the people of God*. His judgment on this weighing, is, That this reproach, because of Christ's concern in it; and this affliction, because it is of and with God's people, is better than all the other things. The true test of mens spirits is justly taken from their settled inward apprehension of the worth and value of spiritual saving mercy, above all outward mercy. Psal. iv. 6, 7. *There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?* Most men are for any good, they know not well what, and from any hand that can show it, and give it. But David knew what good he would have, and who could show it. *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.* Why is he so earnest for this blessing? *Thou hast put gladness in my heart*, (carnal men seek gladness, and make it, and take it to themselves, as well as they can; but gladness of God's putting in their heart, they know not), *more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.* David doth not here com-

ment, till mercy be ready for him, or he more ready for it: Rom. x. 6, 7, 8. *The righteousness which is of faith, speaketh on this wise*, (How very few have ears to hear such a speaker, and such a speech?), *Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is to bring Christ down from above): Or who shall descend into the deep: (that is to bring up Christ again from the dead).* (Christ is come down already from heaven, and is gone back again to heaven). *But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith which we preach.* Mercy and salvation for lost sinners is prepared by Christ's coming down, and going up again; and he hath lodged the power and virtue of his undertaking in the gospel. Suck at that well with faith, and thy soul shall be saved: there thou wilt find Christ, and all his fulness. There was never such a treaty made in the world. We can fetch no similitude fully like this amongst men. Thus the Lord pleads with men in the gospel:—"You "are already undone with sin and misery lying on you, and "you are every hour sinking into greater; let but my mercy "in my Son enter in, and it will cure all that is past and pre-"sent, and prevent all the misery that is coming on you." And will not miserable sinners receive God's mercy? Are you afraid of saving mercy? will it hurt you? why do ye not give it entrance? It is one of the greatest demonstrations what monsters sin hath made men, that they are unwilling to be saved by free mercy, in Jesus Christ. Open a door for God's mercy, by a free receiving of it; or else you will find the door of his mercy shut against you, when you need it most. Your giving way to his mercy, is your receiving of it. Say with the heart, "Let God's mercy enter in upon me, and "save me its own way." A yielding, and giving, and putting of a lost soul into the hand of Christ, is the nature of saving faith in him. Will ye not trust in his mercy? Is it not able to save you? Your want of a sense of your need of his mercy, is a giving the lie to all the threatenings and curse of the law; your doubting of the ability of his mercy to save you, is to give the lie to all the faithfulness and truth of God declared and sworn in the gospel.

3. Plead mercy. When you beg it, use no other plea for

mercy, but mercy. When you beg mercy, you must beg mercy only for mercy's sake. That that moves God to shew mercy, must be our argument in pleading for mercy. Wherefore doth God shew mercy? Because he will shew mercy, and *delights in it*, Micah vii. 18. And therefore should we plead it. Mercy in his heart, is the only spring of mercy from his hand. David, who knew God's mercy well, had tasted of it often, and needed it greatly, when fallen into a foul pit, thus pleads for mercy: Psalm li. 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.* Have a care of making any other plea for mercy from the Lord, but that of mercy with him. And stick to this plea, and it will prevail. If the Lord for trying of your faith, or Satan for shaking it, should say, How dare such a vile sinner as thou art, beg so great a gift as saving mercy, from so holy a God? the poor pleader hath a ready answer: "I want mercy as much as my soul is worth. "In vain do I seek it of any creature; nothing but his "mercy can save me. I beg mercy only for mercy's sake: "I bring nothing but a starving soul, and an empty hand. "I beg his mercy as an alms, which will eternally enrich "the receiver, and not impoverish the giver. What can "such as I beg of such a God as he is, but mercy? His "name is *Mercy*, my name is *Misery*. I would have my "misery relieved by his mercy, and his mercy glorified in "my relief."

4. Hope in his mercy: Psalm cxlvii. 11. *The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.* Psalm cxxx. 7. *Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy.* It is from the devil, for whom there is no mercy, that any of the most miserable out of hell are tempted to think there is no mercy with God for them. He envies men God's mercy. He doth not only tempt to sin, but also to security in it, till the day of mercy be past. If God awaken a sinner to see his need of mercy in time, Satan tempts him to think that it is out of time. In such temptations he acts most like himself, a reprobate damned spirit; and in managing of them he hath great advantages, from his

own craft and malice, and mens just deserving of wrath. Look on all such thoughts as from that adversary, and treat them accordingly. When you beg mercy, look for it: expect to obtain it, when you would lay hold on it. The Lord will never keep back his saving mercy from a sinner that would have it as his life. When you plead for mercy, for mercy's sake, hope to prevail; and that will help you to plead better.

So much for this exhortation. Will ye go home and do so? Will you study more your misery, and the greatness of his mercy; and ask and plead for it more earnestly? There is never better fruit of preaching, than when the hearers are sent away hungering and thirsting after the Lord's mercy.

SERMON VIII.

HEB. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

I HAVE spoke to the first of the blessings to be got at the throne of grace, which we should come for, *obtaining of mercy.* The second is, *The finding of grace to help in time of need.* This expression, *finding of grace*, is probably borrowed from the Old Testament, wherein the bestowing of favour is usually so expressed. We find it in mens pleadings with one another. So Jacob to Esau, Gen. xxxii. 5. and xxxiii. 1. *These are to find grace in the sight of my lord.* And he pleads upon it, ver. 10. *If I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand: for therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God; and thou wast pleased with me.* Jacob had seen God's face that morning, and had found grace in his sight, and he remembers it when he finds grace in the sight of his angry brother. So we find the phrase used in dealing with God, by Moses, Exodus xxxiii. 12, 13, *Yet thou hast said, I*

know thee by name, and thou hast found grace in my sight. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight.

The first thing I would remark here, is, the connection betwixt these two blessings and errands, *obtaining of mercy*, and *finding of grace.* Mercy and grace are joined together by God, and are not be put asunder by man. Many would separate them. They would be content to obtain mercy; but they care not so much for his grace. But such are only profane ignorant persons, that know neither God nor themselves, nor his mercy, nor his grace. The Lord will not give mercy without grace, nor grace without mercy. All that receive either, receive both; and all that would have either, must ask both; and none can ask either aright, but he that asks both.

This grace we are called to come to the throne of grace for the finding of, is specified from its great advantage and usefulness. It is *grace to help in time of need.* The words in the original are, *grace for seasonable opportune help.* It is the nature of this grace, that it is helpful. Its helpfulness mainly appears in a time of need. A time of need will come: this grace is to be asked before that time come; it is to be waited upon till the time of need come, and used when it comes.

The truth to be spoke to, is this plain one:—

Doct. *That all that hear of God's offer of grace, should come to God to ask it, to get it, to find it.*

Men should come to God's throne of grace, for grace for themselves. They should come to God in Christ Jesus, for the grace of God in and by Christ Jesus. This is a truth so bright in its own evidence, that there is no need to confirm it. What hath been said of coming to obtain mercy, is equally binding unto coming to find grace.

Two things, then, I would speak unto at this time.

I. What is this grace we are called to come to the throne of grace for?

II. What finding of grace is; what specialty is there in this expression? It is certain, never did a man find grace, be-

and fill our souls with the communication of that grace, in our use of these means.

3. Grace is considered as it is in the vessels that receive it, in men that partake of it. And here it will be needful to distinguish. The grace of God as received, comes under a very notable distinction of *common grace*, and *saving grace*, or *special*. Somewhat hath been hinted of the same distinction, betwixt *common* and *special saving mercy*. But of this distinction, as to grace received, I would speak more fully.

First, *Common grace* is so called, not because it is ordinary and usual, (for in bad times it is rare enough), but because it is not saving. It is most likely, that in such happy times (which we cannot now boast of, but only hope for) when saving grace is bestowed on many, common grace is dispensed more frequently also. That there is such a thing as common grace, is as certain, as it is that there is such a creature (if I may so call him) as a hypocrite in the church, or in the world. For an hypocrite is nothing else but an unrenewed sinner, painted over with more or less common grace. And to men that see the outside of others only, he may appear like a true Christian.

I would give some particular instances of this common grace.

1. There is a common enlightening grace, a common illumination, Heb. vi. 4. and x. 26. The apostle supposeth, that there is an *enlightening*, and a *receiving a knowledge of the truth*, that may be where a fatal apostasy may follow. The Lord may give the light of his word; and, in and by that light, may dart in some clear beams of gospel-truth on such that are led no farther. It is far from being true, that all knowing heads have sound hearts. There may be, and often is, much clear light in the mind about points of saving truth, when there is no sense, no savour, no faith in the heart. Acts xxvi. we find Paul speaking in the most noble assembly that it is like he ever spoke in; a King and a Queen, and a Roman Governor greater than both. In this august assembly, Paul, though a prisoner in bonds, remembers his being an apostle, and preacheth Christ, and takes Christ's grace in converting him for his text: ver. 24. *When he is thus speaking, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul thou art beside thyself;*

much learning doth make thee mad. At the same time, ver. 28. *Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.* This was a great deal better than Festus's word, yet a poor word in itself. It spoke some glancing of ineffectual light on his mind. An almost Christian, and no more, is but a sinner almost saved, and no more; or one that is no Christian, and never saved at all.

2. There is common awakening grace. The Lord sometimes alarms the consciences of the ungodly, and may raise a great sense of sin in such as are never forgiven; and fears of hell, yea, a foretaste of hell, in some that never escape it. *I have sinned,* saith Pharaoh; *I have sinned* saith Saul: *I have sinned* (saith Judas), *in betraying innocent blood.* Alas, poor wretch! it had been better to have confessed his sin against his master, to his master, than to his murderers. Felix trembled when Paul preached. It was grace in God to come so near to him, and great power was put forth. What else could make such a great prince as Felix was, to tremble at the words of a poor prisoner standing before him in his chains? Awakening grace is but common grace. The law wounds many a conscience that the gospel doth not heal, because not applied to. No wound can the law make, which the gospel cannot heal. Boast not of your wounds by the law, unless you can tell how you were healed. There is no cure for a conscience wounded by sin and by the law, but the blood of Jesus shed for sin. Did ye come to it? Heb. xii. 24. Did he apply it to you? Were you cured of your wounds before ye went to him, and before he came to you? Woful is that cure, and worse than the wound. Many poor creatures are wounded by the law, and to the law they go for healing. But God never appointed the law to heal a wounded conscience; and it never did, nor can, nor will, to the end of the world, nor to eternity. It is Christ's name, and property, and glory, to be the only physician of souls; and all must die of the disease of sin, that are not his happy patients.

3. There is common restraining grace; an act of God's grace and wisdom, which he often puts forth in his ruling of this wicked world. How quickly would this earth become a hell, were it not for this restraining grace? if all unrenewed

may see many things amiss in their way, who are loth to look into their heart. And if light shine in, to discover inward heart-faults, they are still backward to own that all is naught, and that there is no good in their hearts. If the light pursue them yet closer, and make them see that all is stark naught within, they are still more backward to own the true spring of their disease, and the true remedy for it; that all this dominion of sin over them, flows from the natural state of their persons, as standing still in and under the first sinful Adam; and can never be altered and mended, but by grace putting them into Christ, as the root of their new life.

3. Saving grace respects and works on the new nature. Special grace not only changeth a man's state, nor his old corrupt nature only: but it works on this new nature wrought by grace. The special operation of the grace of God, in and from the fountain, is upon his own new creation in the hearts of his children. We cannot conceive it fully; our minds are not able to take in these depths of God. We hear from, and read in the word, of the intimate correspondence the Lord entertains with them in whom he dwells. *Christ dwells in the heart by faith*, Eph. iii. 17. *His Spirit dwells in his people*, Rom. viii. 9, 10, 11. But what is it in their hearts that he dwells in? He dwells in his own workmanship in their hearts, in his own new creation, in his own garden that he hath planted in them. There his presence is, and there his eye is, on that his hand is; this is that he waters, and carefully looks after. When a believer comes to the throne of grace, for this grace, he comes to beg that the new creation in him may be visited, refreshed, and strengthened, and brought to perfection. They that have no planting of Christ in them, want this errand to the throne of grace, that believers daily come upon.

So much for the first thing, What this grace is?

II. *What is the finding of this grace?* Why the apostle useth this phrase, different from the former, about mercy? That was *obtaining of mercy*, this is *finding of grace*. *Mercy* and *grace* are near a-kin; and so is *obtaining* and *finding*. Besides the Hebrew phrase, remarked already, these things I would note in it:—

1. I conceive, that this phrase of *finding grace*, doth imply the duty of seeking it; according to our Lord's own direction, Matth. vii. 7. *Ask, and it will be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* Where, and in ver. 8. our Lord gives three commands to one duty of prayer, under three several names; and six promises for encouragement, under three different names also, redoubled.

2. This form of speaking, points forth the giving and bestowing of grace. His grace and favour is what is given to, bestowed on, and enjoyed by them that come to the throne of grace. When the old world was exceeding bad, all stark naught, and but one good man in it, (you must needs think that it was a bad world then), and that was Noah, Gen. vi. 8. *But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.* This word we should regard the more, that it is the first place where *the grace of God* is mentioned in scripture. *Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation*, saith the Lord to him, Gen. vii. 1. And how this man came by his righteousness, see in Heb. xi. 7. *By faith, Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.* Who but the Spirit of God by Paul (who, I think, was the penman of this epistle) would have found the righteousness of faith in Noah's building of the ark? Many, nay, most of men, called *Christians*, cannot see this righteousness that is by faith, in the gospel itself. There was a brave inheritance, and estate in this righteousness of faith, secured and revealed in the first gospel, Gen. iii. 15. Of this estate Abel and Enoch were possessed; and Noah *became* (that is, declared himself) an heir of it, by his faith, and the fruits of it. The whole world had the warning; Noah from God, the world by Noah. All were equally concerned in the danger. Noah preached it to them; and God's Spirit was with him, striving with them a hundred and twenty years. But not one man found grace, but he alone. A prodigious depth of judgment and mercy! such a man as Noah preached so long to *the world of the ungodly*, as 2 Pet. ii. 5. and not one single man or woman believed. He only *found grace in the eyes of the Lord.* Jer. xxxi. 2. *Thus saith the Lord, The people*

must come to this throne of grace, where only it is to be found. This text hath a strong argument in it, as well as a great encouragement. Are men invited to the throne of grace, that they may find grace? Then surely graceless folks should mainly come, and have most need to come. You will say, that *the prayer of the wicked man is an abomination to the Lord.* True; what then? Therefore, say you, I should not pray. A bad inference. But say you, Were it not better that a man should mend and grow better, and then come, and not till then? This is a perverse method, that Satan befools multitudes with. I pray you, how long may a man be a-mending himself, ere he be one bit better, till the grace of God come and mend him? A sinner never doth know truly his badness, till he see it incurable by all his own doings, and that it is only curable by sovereign grace. Men see a little of the fruits of sin in their walk; and them, or some of them, they think they may remove; and so indeed they may. But the fountain remains still, and will send forth its streams one way or other. Till a man see his heart and nature, he seeth but the outside of sin in himself. It is the sight of sin in our nature, of sin as our nature, that is truly humbling. Then a man seeth himself quite lost, and for ever undone, without any possible ground of hope, unless almighty free grace undertake for him.

In answer to this objection, in all its strength, I say four things.

1. Coming to the throne of grace for grace, is required by God. He commands it as a piece of honour to him, that all should implore his grace. No sinful or miserable circumstances can be in the condition of any out of hell, that can dissolve mens obligations to this duty. The power of sin and guilt on an ungodly man, disables him quite from the right performance of any command of God; but doth not loose the obligation of God's law upon his conscience. You are bound to pray; you cannot pray. This is your strait; own it. Grace can only extricate you out of it.

2. Secure neglect of prayer, is a great deal worse than a faulty managing of it. Let such folks say then, I will pray, and try to pray: and though I should mar twenty prayers, I

will pray still; for it is better to try it as we can, than to neglect it quite. What know you but grace may come in, and help you, when sinking under the weight of prayer?

3. Is not that a good prayer, and fit for your case, Luke xi. 1. *Lord, teach us to pray?* "Lord teach us to come the right "way to the throne of grace?" If you can say no more, say that, and you can say nothing better. An humble groaning to Christ, to be taught by him to pray, hath more of true prayer in it, than many fine words, which men call *prayer*, and commend as brave praying.

4. Is it not a throne of grace you are called to come to, that ye may find grace? You want grace, and cannot come, say ye; You want grace, and therefore come, say I. You are not to bring grace of your own working, but to find it of his giving at this throne. Would you have grace? Come, and get it. Men perish under the gospel only for their refusing of the grace of God. And justly are they counted refusers of grace, that will not come where it is to be found: and most righteous is their condemnation.

Inference 2. Should we come to the throne of grace, that we may find grace? Then prayerless people are graceless people. Grace is only to be had at this throne; therefore such as have no business at the throne of grace, are a graceless people. A prayerless person is a graceless person; a prayerless family is a graceless family; and London would be a graceless city, and England a graceless kingdom, if there were no seekers of God in them. But blessed be God, there are a great many. The Lord *make them an hundred times more, and that our eyes may see it*, as Joab said to David about numbering of Israel, 2 Samuel xxiv. 3. Jer. x. 25. *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name. Heathens that know not God*, and *families that call not on his name*, are the same sort of folks, and the same wrath of God hangs over them. Wrath overtakes all that have not found grace at this throne.

Inference 3. It follows also, that the most diligent pliers of the throne of grace, are the greatest receivers of grace: and the greatest receivers of grace, are the greatest comers to, and users of the throne of grace. Would ye try the measures of

grace received? Try it by your diligence in praying. Some would fain know how it is with their souls. Here is a short, plain, and sure mark to judge it by. How goes the work of praying? It is a better mark, than you increase in light and knowledge of the letter of gospel-truth; better than to try yourselves by your public duties, and attendance upon all outward ordinances. It is impossible, that a man can be diligent, painful, and serious in plying of the throne of grace, but there will be grace found, more or less, of one sort or other. Every one must say with the Psalmist, Psal. lxxiii. 28. *But it is good for me to draw near to God;* and the oftener the better. *He hath not said to us, that we should seek his face in vain,* Isa. xlv. 19. And none of the seekers of his face dare say, that they do seek him in vain, unless in a fit of temptation, when they lie against their right. It is also as impossible that the work of grace can prosper, when this *high-way is unoccupied,* as Deborah sings, Judges v. 6. That Christian that lets grass grow on the road betwixt him and heaven, rottenness is entering into his bones, a consumption is coming on upon his soul, and *the holy flesh is passed from him,* as Jer. xi. 15. The savour and relish the soul finds in approaching to the throne of grace, is the surest test of soul-prospering. In this I appeal to the consciences of all that ever knew communion with God. Is it not best with you every way, when you are most with him? Do not your burdens grow light, when you cast them on the Lord? Is not your path plain, when his candle shineth upon you; and doth it not shine when you are much in company? Difficulties evanish, and hard work grows easy, when the Lord is with you, and you with him. See how the apostle joins things together, Jude, ver. 20, 21. *But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.* Your faith, your love, your hope, are all to be acted in prayer: and are cherished by prayer, and strengthened by the answer of prayer. Would you have plenty of the grace of God? Here is a plain and sure way taught you by the apostle; and he joins himself with them he exhorts, *Let us come to the throne of grace, that we may find grace.*

SERMON IX.

HEB. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

THE gracious call and invitation contained in this text, hath been often spoke to: an invitation frequently delivered in the preaching of the gospel, and as frequently slighted by most of the hearers of the gospel. It is such an invitation, as if it were delivered in the last day to the miserable company on Christ's left hand, we may think what complying with it would there be. If there were a throne of grace set up then for but one hour, where mercy and grace might be had in that time of need, think ye not that there would be coming and crowding, crying and roaring, for mercy and grace? But that day will afford no such privilege. Now you have it; and the Lord knows, and next to him your consciences know, how this is entertained. What this throne of grace is; what coming to it is; what boldness in coming is allowed; what ground there is for this boldness, have been spoke to. The last thing in this verse, what blessings may be had by coming, hath been spoke to also; of the mercy to be obtained, and of the grace to be found. Of this last I have handled two things. 1. What is the grace that is to be found? 2. What the phrase of *finding grace* imports?

There are two things more that remain in the text:—

I. *The helpfulness of this grace.* We are called to come to *find grace to help.*

II. *The seasonableness of this help of grace.* It is *grace to help in time of need.* So our translation carries it, and pretty well. The original runs in fewer words, *grace unto seasonable help*, or *help in due season.*

Of these two I would speak at this time.

I. I would speak of *the helpfulness of grace.* God's grace is a most helpful blessing.

1. It is promised, by him that gives it, as help. Isa. xli. 10. *Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.* Alas! who hath faith enough to draw at this deep well of salvation? Every word hath rich food for faith. Whenever God would engage the heart of a poor creature to a dependence on him, he doth it, by promising to be that to them, and to do that for them, that none besides himself can be or do. No man can truly act faith on God, for that he thinks a creature can do for him. You never believe soundly, but when you look to, and wait on God, for that is impossible utterly to the whole creation to give to you, or to do for you.

2. Again, we find the saints beg God's help. Whenever they come to God in earnest, they come to this, *Lord, help*: for *all other help is vain.* There is no more common prayer in the Old and New Testament, and to this day, than prayer for the Lord's helping grace. All our prayers, in their greatest variety, centre in this, *Help us by thy grace.* The great believer, Matth. xv. 25. *came and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.* A short prayer, but mighty, and full of faith. A weaker man in faith than this woman, Mark ix. 22. *Have compassion on us, and help us,* praying for himself and his son; ver. 24. he prays for himself alone, *Lord, help my unbelief.* There is no believer on earth who may not daily pray this prayer.

3. All the people of God find the helpfulness of his grace. All that seek it, find it; and all that find it, find the helpfulness of his grace.

First, I would in a few things shew the helpfulness of grace.

1. The grace of God helps always to purpose, and effectually. This grace helped Paul to *labour more abundantly than all the apostles,* 2 Cor. xv. 10. I say not, that this is always sensible to the receiver; but only that grace given is always really effectual for the end for which it is given. It is not given in vain.

2. The grace of God helps universally. There is no case wherein it is not helpful. As *without Christ we can do nothing,* John xv. 5.; so, *through him strengthening,* we may *do all things,* or *any thing,* Phil. iv. 13. A Christian can imagine, can fore-

see no condition, no trial, no difficulty, wherein the Lord's grace cannot help him. So the text runs, *that we may find grace to help in time of need.* Let the time be what it will, and the need what it will, grace can help in it. It were a sad weakness of faith for any Christian to say, *I am in that condition, that the grace of God cannot help me in.* His grace is omnipotent.

3. Grace helps sweetly. I mean, that it doth not help as an external help, but as an internal. As for a familiar similitude: A weak and weary, or lame person, may be helped by the strength of another, or by being carried; but this is but external help. This weak or lame person is helped far better, when his infirmity is removed, and new strength given to him, so that he can pleasantly walk and run: Psal. cxxxviii. 3. *In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me; and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.* It is true, the grace of God, wherein our strength consists, is without us, and in him; but it is inwardly applied to us, when strength is found and felt. Therefore is it that believers not only find, by the dispensings of his helping grace, an effectual strength for their work and duty; but a great deal of sweetness and easiness in the exerting of that gracious help. So Psal. cxix. 32. *I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.* When *he draws, we run,* Song i. 4. When such helping influences of grace come on believers, holy obedience becomes in a manner as sweet, easy, and natural to them, as it is to a man that hath bodily strength, to use it in speaking, walking, or working: Isa. xl. 31. *They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew* (or change) *their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.* Psal. ciii. 5. *Thy youth is renewed like the eagles,* is one of the notes in the Psalmist's sweet song. No saint is ignorant of this in his own experience. Who knows not, that at some times their work is heavy, and is a burden too heavy for them; at other times it is as light as a feather; and as pleasant and easy to them, as for a bird that hath wings to fly?

4. *Lastly,* The grace of God helps very mysteriously. Sometimes its help is very secret; and at other times it is very plain to be discovered. Its help is sometimes so secret, that

the saints cannot know or discern it at present, but they are made to know it afterwards: Psal. lxxiii. 2. *But as for me, my feet were almost gone: my steps had well-nigh slipt.* Ver. 22. *So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee.* This is the account he gives of the power of the temptation he was under, and of the bad frame it had brought upon him. Ver. 23. *Nevertheless, I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand.* He did not know this, till he was brought out of the darkness of the temptation: but then he did discern, that there had been a secret support given him, otherwise he had fallen utterly.

Secondly, What encouragement have we to come to the throne of grace for this helping grace?

1. The proposal and revelation made to us of this grace as helpful, is an encouragement to come for it. Hath the Lord revealed his grace, as only helpful to his people; and should they not come for that help? Your faith is not very strong and active, unless you can catch at the grace of God, without a plain particular promise. I say not, but there are promises many and great of this helping grace, and that faith must build upon them, and doth: but I only mean, that the bare revelation of the treasures of grace that are with the Lord, should, when an interest in the promises is dark, encourage a poor soul to come for a share of this grace of God: Psal. cxxx. 4. *But there is forgiveness with thee.* He saith not, *There is forgiveness for me;* but, *There is forgiveness with thee.* So verse 7. *Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.* Wherefore is this *forgiveness*, this *mercy*, this *redemption*, with the Lord; and why is it revealed; but that the guilty should come for this *forgiveness*, the miserable for this *mercy*, the many-ways captives for this *plenteous redemption?* The Lord's fulness of grace is an argument for our faith, as well as his goodness and faithfulness in making and performing promises of grace.

2. But we have promises also for our encouragement. Promises imply God's fulness of grace; but do express his good will to dispense it, and do bind and engage his truth to fulfil them, to all that take God at his word, and trust him on his word. It is a pity, that ever the *exceeding great and pre-*

cious promises, and *precious faith*, 2 Pet. i. 1, 4. should be parted. Mark x. 49. *And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called: and they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.* They had no promise; but they understood Christ's calling of the blind man, was an act of mercy, and on a design of shewing more mercy. But we have many promises of grace.

3. We have all the experience of the communication of his grace, according to his promises, for our encouragement in coming for grace. Every supplicant for grace should encourage his heart, by all the Lord's dispensings of his grace. How many of these are revealed in the word! and many like them daily are to be seen in the church of Christ. If you have such experiences of your own, build upon them, praise for them, and beg more. If you have none of your own, behold the showers of grace, that have fallen upon many as bad as yourselves, and which have changed them into that same blessed state that you desire to be in.

Application. 1. Is the grace of God thus helpful? and should we come to the throne of grace for the help of grace? Then we see, that weak Christians should pray most. Such as can do least for themselves, have most need of grace to help them, and should seek it most. Is any man under a clear conviction, by the light of the word, and his own sensible experience, that he is extremely weak, and utterly unable for any good word or work? This man, of all men, should pray most. Manage your sense of weakness, as a call to ask much of this helping grace of God.

2. Surely, then, coming to the throne of grace for grace to help, must be hopeful work. If at any time Satan, or an ungodly world, should tempt you, or your own heart fail you, in fears of the unprofitableness of seeking God, have this as a ready answer: "I am fit for nothing, his grace can help me "in every thing. Whither should I go but to the throne of "grace? what can I beg there but his grace?" Say with David, Psal. lvii. 2, 3. *I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me. He shall send from heaven, and save me. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.* And will not these save any man?

Exhortation. I would give you a few directions in the practice of this duty of coming to the throne of grace for helping grace.

1. Come to seek this helping grace.
2. When you seek it, expect it.
3. When you expect it, receive it.
4. When you receive it, guide it.

Exhort. 1. Come to the throne of grace to seek helping grace. *Seeking* (as is already remarked) is not expressed in the text; yet it is plainly implied, both in the duty of *coming*, and in the blessings of *obtaining* and *finding*. You must seek grace to help you. Grace will not help to sin, but helps against it; yet, blessed be God, grace can, and will help sinners, otherwise we were in a forlorn state indeed. Grace will not help to laziness, (that were an hinderance, and no help); but grace will help lazy people, and help them out of it. To engage your diligence in seeking helping grace, I would shew you what help grace gives.

1. Grace helps to save you. If people come to the throne of grace, if men pray, and have not salvation in their eye, they come not aright, they pray not. *We are saved by grace*, Eph. ii. 5. Nothing but grace can save a sinner; and if it were not the grace of God, and therefore omnipotent, it could not save. Is not it a great help, to be helped to salvation? Is not that a great lift, to be *delivered from the power of darkness, and* to be *translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son:* Col. i. 13. Who would not prize and desire a saving lift of God's grace? All that have found it, value it: and they that never found it, should (but will not) beg it earnestly. *The grace of God brings salvation*, Tit. ii. 11. It brings it near to men in the gospel. This is all that it doth to many. But to some this grace brings salvation, and gives it; plants it in their hearts, and waters it, and makes it grow with the increases of God, till it be ripe, full-grown salvation. Would you be helped to heaven? Imploy and implore the grace of God. It only can do it. And must not they perish, and do they not perish justly, that will not accept of saving grace, nor beg it, when they must perish without it?

2. Grace helps to grace. All the grace that is given to us,

is but a drop from the great fountain of grace that we make our application to. The first grace that is in us, is a gift and stream of that grace that is with him. That gracious change that is wrought on a sinner, by which, of a graceless, he is made a gracious person; how do you think it is brought about? There is a mystery in it that a master in Israel did not know, John iii. 9, 10. No similitude from the old creation can fully declare it; yet some of them are used in the word, and gives some light. This work of grace on the ungodly whom this grace falls on, is like a sun-beam darted from the body of the Sun of righteousness, upon a sinner dead in sins, that doth immediately quicken him, and enliven him. It is both light and life. It is all originally in Christ, and out of his fulness given to all that partake of it; John i. 4. *In him was life, and the life was the light of men*, John viii. 12. *I am the light of the world; he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life*, saith our Lord Jesus. Christ is such a sun that all on whom his gracious beams light, are saved. He quickens all he shines upon. Men perish under the gospel indeed; but it is because the light of it shines only about them, and without them, 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6. but not into their hearts. All the grace whereby any, and all the redeemed of the Lord, are converted, beautified, and saved, is from the highest spring, grace in Christ: 1 Tim. i. 14. *And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.* How came Paul by all the faith and love his blessed soul was filled with? All came from the grace of the Lord Jesus. And every partaker of true grace will own the same original.

3. The helping grace which we should ask, not only helps to salvation and grace, but also helps grace itself. The grace received, must be refreshed and watered, and made to grow, by influences from the same fountain from whence it first flowed, or else it will wither quickly. Therefore we have the grace of God in the fountain to betake ourselves unto, for the helping of his grace in us. For though grace as in Christ needs no help; yet his grace given to, and dwelling in us, needs a great deal. The father of the lunatic, Mark ix. 22, 24. came to the throne of grace but sorrily. What a mar-

vellous change was wrought in him, and that suddenly? In his first address he acted unbelief grossly; in the next he acts faith, professeth faith, and prays Christ's help against his unbelief. Many did cast out devils in Christ's name; but none could help other folks unbelief, nor their own. His begging help against his unbelief, was the same prayer with that of the apostles, Luke xvii. 5. *Lord, increase our faith.* And it gave more honour to Christ in his office of a Saviour, and did signify more, both of true faith in Christ, and of an honest heart in the man, than if he had addressed with the highest confidence to the Lord, to cast the devil out of his son. The youth is lying wallowing and foaming, and torn by the evil spirit, in the sight of his tender father: yet no sooner doth the light of faith shine in his heart, but he seeth a devil of unbelief there also; and he first begs that Christ would cast out that, and help his faith. For *helping of unbelief*, and *helping of faith*, is the same thing. He that seeks the helping of his unbelief, seeks the removing of it; and he that seeks the helping of his faith, seeks the increase and strengthening of it. And both are done by the same hand, by the same act of grace, and at the same time, whenever and where-ever they are done. And as it is with faith, so it is with all the graces of the Spirit in believers; they do need help of his grace; and it must be sought at the throne of grace. Can you say, *I repent?* add, *Lord, help my impenitence. I love?* say, *Lord, help its coldness, and blow it up to a flame.* Where the true grace of God is, there is still some sense of its weakness, and inclination after an increase therein; and some dependence acted on the Lord, *who began the good work, for performing it to the day of Jesus Christ*, Phil. i. 6.

4. The grace of God *helps our infirmities*, Rom. viii. 26. If it were not written, we should think it hard to use the expression. If the Spirit of God plant grace in the heart, is not that fair? if he water his own plants, is not that fair? Nay, but, saith the apostle, he *helps our infirmities* also. Might not the Holy Spirit disdain to have any dealing with the infirmities of his people? Yes: but he will not. If he take no care of our infirmities, we may, and must be lost

thereby. A criminal pardoned by an act of grace, may die of a disease, if not cured; may starve of hunger and cold, if not provided with necessaries; may be slain by his enemies, if not protected. Sense of infirmities should make us beg helping grace.

5. Grace helps in all the work and duty we are called to. Without assisting grace, the least piece of work cannot be rightly done, and by its help any work may be done: 2 Cor. ix. 8. *God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye always having all-sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.* There is *grace, all grace,* and *it abounding* in God *toward his people.* From this given to them, there is *sufficiency* and *all-sufficiency,* and that *always* and in *all things;* and thence flows *good work, every good work,* and *abounding to every good work.* Like to this is his prayer, Heb. xiii. 20, 21. *The God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.* We need grace's help in every good work. No work is truly good, but what grace helps us to. Grace and works agree sweetly in this order. Grace begins, and works follow. Grace works on the man, and makes him a worker: grace passeth on the person and his works, and makes them accepted; and the accepted worker gives grace all the glory, both of his works, and of his own and their acceptance. Whence his help comes, thither his praises go.

6. *Lastly,* Grace helps in extremities. But of this in the last thing in the text.

This then is the first exhortation, Come to the throne of grace, seeking helping grace. Enlarge and heighten the sense of your need and weakness as much as you will, the supply to be had at the throne of grace is sufficient: Phil. iv. 19. *My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.* And, in Paul's style, *glory* and *grace* change names frequently, Eph. i. 6, 12, 14. and iii. 16. 2 Cor. iii. 18.

Exhort. 2. You must not only seek grace to help; but when you seek it, you must expect it. The text runs plainly this way. The apostle implies *asking;* but expresseth *finding,* and *coming* that we may *find.* Therefore we should come

with expectation of finding. The spirit and life of prayer in faith, lieth more in expectation than in asking. Unwise Christians let out the life-blood and vital spirits of prayer, when they let their expectations languish. Here is a common, but unregarded error, in Christians exercise. When they set their face to pray, they make some conscience of searching out their wants; they labour to improve that sight to the raising of fervent desires of a supply of them: if they yet go hither, to take in a sense of the fulness and freeness of that grace where their help is; yet how rarely are they careful to raise up expectations of that helping grace? Few can say, as Psalm lv. 16. *As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me.* Ver. 17. *Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice.* Few can charge their souls as he did, Psalm lxii. 5. *My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.* See how the prophet's faith rose, Micah vii. 7. *I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me. Looking* is a needy act of faith, *waiting* is an expecting act, and *assurance* is the highest. If you look to the Lord, you may quickly know he is the God of your salvation; if you know him as the God of your salvation, and your God, you will ask earnestly, wait patiently, and by the same faith prophesy a gracious answer. What do you take praying in faith to be, James i. 6.? It is not only to pray, believing that we call upon the true God, in the name of Christ, and for things agreeable to his will: it is not only that we believe that he is able to give what we ask; but that he will give what is good. But because his grace to help, is not only good, and always good, but nothing is good without it, Christians should beg grace with confident expectations. What means Christ's frequent answer to men: Matth. viii. 13. *As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee?* and Matth. ix. 29. *According to your faith, be it unto you?* Is it not to tell us, that he measures out his bounty to men, according, to their believing expectations from him? John xi. 40. *Jesus saith unto Martha, Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?* Our way is, if we could see the glory of God, then we would believe. Christ's way is

just contrary: we must first believe, and then we shall see the glory of God. We say, If the Lord would glorify himself in performing his promises, and in hearing our prayers, then we would believe strongly. But this is inverting of Christ's order. Martha was a believer in Christ, and expresseth faith several ways in this chapter. It appears in the joint message they sent to Christ, ver. 3. *Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest, is sick.* Ver. 5. *Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.* A blessed family, and few like it; all loved of Christ, and doubtless lovers of Christ. But they built more on his love to them, than on their love to him, like humble and wise believers: verse 21. *Martha said unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.* Her sister Mary said the same, ver. 32. It is likely, that none ever died in Christ's presence, when he was on earth; he cured all that employed him. *But I know, that even now whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee,* ver. 22. Here was some faith. When Christ promiseth, ver. 23. that *her brother should rise again,* she acts faith as to the doctrine of the resurrection, ver. 24. *I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.* When Christ goes on in preaching himself, ver. 25, 26. and asks her of her faith; she answered bravely, *Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ the Son of God, which should come into the world,* ver. 27. A confession like Peter's, Matth. xvi. 16. What then was wanting in this good woman? Why doth our Lord put such an *if thou wouldest believe,* to one that did believe so much and so well? Because, notwithstanding her faith in Christ's person, as the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world; notwithstanding her faith of his power; yet, in this instance of raising Lazarus, she expected nothing. When Christ, verse 39. bids *take away the stone,* she said, *Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.* She that believed Lazarus should rise at the last day, could not believe that he should rise after death had held him but four days. Such is the very nature of unbelief, or of weak faith in true believers; they can, or rather think they do, believe greater and harder things, when not much tried about them, better and more easily, than smaller and easier things that their

faith is called to a present exercise about. Let all Christians, in all their approaches to the throne of grace, behold this as written on the open gates to this throne, and hear it proclaimed by him that sitteth on it, *Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?* Some believers are apt to think, that a trembling fearing frame is fitter for them; and that raising of expectation of good from God, will prevent or hinder humility, and lying low before the Lord. But they are quite mistaken that think faith and humility are inconsistent. They not only agree well together, but they cannot be parted: Hab. ii. 4. *Behold, his soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.* To bottom expectations of grace from God, on the account of any good, real or apprehended, in us, or done by us, is not only destructive of humility, but of faith also. A boaster is an abominable creature at the throne of grace; but a pleader for, and expectant of grace, for grace's sake, is an humble believer, and a right courtier at this throne.

Exhort. 3. You must not only seek grace when you come to the throne of grace, and expect it when you seek it, but you must be careful to receive grace when it is given. Make room for it. What is said by the Lord in the prophet, Mal. iii. 10. though spoke in another case, is applicable to this: *I will open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.* Felt want, and strong faith, make much room for the grace of God. *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it,* Psalm lxxxi. 10. It must be a wide-mouthed soul that takes in, and a well-filled soul that receives a fill of God. How mighty is that prayer, Eph. iii. 17, 18, 19.? We have all need not only to get it by heart, but to get it into our hearts, and to send it up to heaven daily from our hearts. Paul makes a special preface to that prayer, ver. 14, 15. In it he prays for *the strengthening of the inner man, by the Spirit,* ver. 16. *That Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith,* ver. 17. *That being rooted in love, they might measure the dimensions of Christ's love, and know it that passeth knowledge,* ver. 18, 19. Can any man go higher in prayer? Yes, one step higher; *That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.* Now, who hath room in his soul for the

answer of such a prayer as this is? If we had not these mighty words in this way, we should be tempted to think that it were rather a prophecy of what is to be enjoyed within the vail, than a prayer of faith to be put up by travellers in the way to heaven, and for blessings to be enjoyed in the house of their pilgrimage. But a prayer it is, and some good performance is given within time; though the main measure of the answer of this (as of all the most spiritual prayers of saints in this life) is reserved for the day of the Lord. It is a greater matter, both of duty and difficulty, than most Christians think, to have the everlasting doors of our souls lifted up, and cast open, that the King of glory may enter with his super-abounding grace. Many believers take much pains, and make many prayers, for that grace of God, which yet they receive not, when it comes, and craves room and admittance. Grace comes always in and with Jesus Christ. Whatever therefore hinders his welcome, excludes his grace from entering. Grace comes in and by the promise. If the promise be not received by faith, how can the grace promised be received? Grace comes always as grace, free and undeserved. How can a proud person receive it? And there is pride often working in the discouragements of Christians. They find they want much of the helping grace of God: they ask it, they see it in the promises, and in Christ's hand: but they think, Should such as I lay hold on such a precious gift as his grace? Why not? It is grace, grace offered of grace, given of grace. Do you need it? Why do you not receive it, and make room for it? Some receive not that grace that is tendered to them; because it is not the particular grace they sought, and expected, or because it comes not to them in that way they looked for it in. Others receive not, nor welcome the grace they beg; because they think they cannot receive it. They look on receiving as a great and difficult business, far above their ability. But is refusing of it hard also? Alas! that is easy, because natural to our hearts. Is not the seed of receiving in all sincere asking and expecting of grace from God? Receiving of his grace, is no more but a heart-willingness that his grace may enter in, and act like itself upon us. And this receiving act of faith doth greatly

glorify God. Some think it very strange, and hardly credible, that any believer can ask earnestly that grace, which when tendered he is not willing to receive. See how it was with some eminent saints: Job ix. 16. *If I had called, and he had answered me; yet would not I believe that he had hearkened unto my voice.* Why so? *For he breaketh me with a tempest*, ver. 17. But may not fatherly love and correction be together on a believer? Rev. iii. 19. Yet the sense of the smart of correction, is a strong temptation to question the love of the corrector. David, or Asaph, Psal. lxxvii. 1, 2, 3. *I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice, and he gave ear unto me.* Who would think that this man refused to be comforted? Did he not pray for consolation? Yet he saith, *My soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.* There is a peevishness of unbelief, that Christians should watch against.

Exhort. 4. You must take care to guide this helping grace of God, when you have received it. Guiding of grace, is an art and mystery that Christians should study diligently. The rule of this art is this, Guide the grace of God received by you, for those ends for which it is given by him. Now, what ends hath the Lord in giving of his grace? They are only two. 1. For the praise and glory of the giver. 2. For the benefit of the receivers. Guide his grace for those ends, and you guide and use it well. Christians have little of his grace, and complain sorrowfully; not because he gives, and they receive little; but because they guide and manage this richest talent poorly. Dare any believer forbear to say, If I had kept all I had got, and guided well all he hath given, I had been far richer in grace than now I am? Misguiding of grace received is the greatest sin, because an abuse of the greatest blessing. Watch against it, if you love his glory, and your own weal.

II. I come now to the fourth and last thing in the verse, about this grace of God; and that is, *the seasonableness of its help.* It helps always, but especially *in time of need.* On this I shall now only note some few things in general.

Obs. 1. Whatever believers present case be, a time of need

may come; and they should foresee it. Though they know not particular circumstances, yet they should lay their account with it. The Lord gives faithful warnings in the word; faith should take them. We see the times of need that many others come in; and we should take warning by their experience. Every Christian hath found times of special need formerly; the like may come again.

Obs. 2. Christians should pray before the time of need come, for that grace that may help them when it comes. The prophet speaks of *hearing for the time to come*, Isa. xlii. 23.; the apostle, 1 Tim. vi. 19. of *laying up in store a good foundation for the time to come.* So here, men must pray for the time to come. *Is any man afflicted? let him pray*, James v. 13.; and because any man may be afflicted, he should pray beforehand.

1. Because we know not but we may be surprised by a time of need; our Lord's argument, Mark xiii. 33. *Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.* The Lord rarely gives particular warning of the time when special need is coming. It ordinarily comes by surprise to us. Death may, but sickness, losses, and affliction, usually come on suddenly: and surprising trials are sore and searching ones.

2. We should pray before a time of need come; for often when that time comes, we are thereby disabled for prayer. The distress may be such, that even a believer can do nothing. The *night may come, when no man can work*, John ix. 4. Pray much before it come.

3. Because many prayers have their answer delayed till a time of need comes. Christians think, that every day and hour of their life is a time of need, (and so it is in some sense); but there are some special seasons of great need, of which the Lord is the only disposer; and he fits such times with dispensings of that grace, that his people have many a day begged before. There may be worse reasoning than this: "It "may be there are some blessings of grace, that I have oft "sought, and have not yet got, that are reserved for me by "the Lord, against a time when I shall need them more than "now I do."

Thus you see, in the scope of the apostle in these words,

that there is strong arguing for constant seeking of God's grace. You are either at present in a time of special need; or if it be not present, it may come. Whatever case a believer is in, his obligation is in a manner equal to this great duty of *coming to the throne of grace, for grace to help him*, as his matters do require.

SERMON X.

HEB. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

YOU have heard that the gracious exhortation in the text to coming to the throne of grace, is directed with respect to the getting of two great blessings, or of one under two names God's *mercy* and *grace*. Concerning this grace I have spoken to three things. 1. What this grace is. 2. What the finding of this grace is. 3. What is the helpfulness of this grace so found. I also entered upon the fourth and last thing, the seasonableness of this helping grace.

The truth I am to speak to, is this:—

DOCT. *The grace of God is specially helpful in times of special need.*

My work then is to shew,

I. What are those times of need.

II. What the helpfulness of grace in them is.

Only I would usher in this discourse, with a general consideration of the constant need that all stand in of God's mercy and grace. And that I would branch into four. We need God's mercy and grace, as creatures, as men, as sinners, and as Christians; and that always.

1. As creatures. The native notion of a creature is, that

it is a contingent, necessitous being: *For his pleasure they are, and were created*, Rev. iv. 11. The Lord did not make all or any creature because he needed them; but he made them that they might need him. He did not build this glorious fabric of heaven and earth, as a *house to dwell in*, or to *contain him*, 1 Kings viii. 27.; but he made this world as a stage, on which to display his glorious wisdom and power: and he made some of its inhabitants, angels in the upper rooms, and men in the lower, to be spectators and praisers of his glory. It is not proper to say, that creatures needed their being before the Creator gave it: For when there was nothing but God, there could be no need. Need and want is essential to a creature, and springs up with their being. As soon as the creation received its being by *the word of his power*, it needs upholding by the same power: Heb. i. 3. our Lord Jesus *upholds all things by the word of his power*. The whole creation would fall back immediately into its mother Nothing, if the same power that gave it a being did not every moment preserve it. Would you have a joyful view of heaven and earth? Look on all as in our Lord's hand. Why do the heavens keep their course? Why doth the sun shine so gloriously, move so regularly, and influence the earth so virtuously with his light and heat? It is because Christ *upholds all things by the word of his power. He is before all things, and by him all things consist: all things were created by him, and for him*, Col. i. 16, 17. Many are *without Christ in the world*, Eph. ii. 12. Many see daily the works of creation and providence, and never think on Christ as the head of all. But it is no wonder, that men that have no eyes to see Christ in the new creation of grace, cannot see him in the old creation of nature. We, as creatures, are needy of God's helping grace and favour: for *in him we live, and move, and have our being*, Acts xvii. 28. *In his hand our breath is, and his all our ways are*, Dan. v. 23.

2. Our need of God's grace appears yet more, as we are such creatures, men. We are, through the bounty of God, the most considerable part of this lower creation. Of man some understand that elegant phrase, Prov. viii. 26. *The highest part of the dust of the world.* But there is no earthly creature needy of God's grace but man, even in his natural frame,

abstract from his sinful state. The great former of all things hath given to all a being, and to many of his creatures no more. To some of his creatures he hath given life, a nobler sort of being. But to all living creatures, but man, he gives no more, and they need no more; they have not, they need not eternal life. When *the breath* of the other living creatures *goes downward*, as the word is Eccl. iii. 21. there is an end of them. But man is created in that state, that he must be for ever, and therefore be eternally happy or miserable. This state he is made in, makes him vastly needy of God's grace and mercy.

3. We grow yet more needy as sinners. Sinners are creatures, with this great blemish, of guilt, sin, and corruption. A sinner is needy of a Mediator to deal for him with God; for he cannot deal with God for himself. A sinner is needy of the righteousness of another to recommend him to God's acceptance; for he hath none of his own. The righteousness of a sinner is a plain contradiction. And unless the power of sin had blinded men in the right knowledge of God, and of themselves, and unless it had puffed up their hearts in this darkness, there had never been any pretence made by fallen men to self-righteousness. But now nothing is more common, more groundless, and yet more rooted in mens hearts, than that a sinner can, and may, if he will, bring or do somewhat that may have some interest in, and influence on his acceptance with God. A sinner is needy of a right to eternal life: and this must be bought by another; for he can never purchase it for himself. He is needy of safety from the wrath to come, which is so wofully well deserved by him; and the man can do nothing of himself, but what deserves it more and further.

4. We are needy of the help of grace as Christians, as new creatures. A Christian is a creature, by nature a human creature, a sinful creature; but made a new creature by grace. Yet there are some springs of constant need of grace, in this new creature, the Christian.

1*st*, The necessary and constant dependance of the new creature on its fountain and author, makes a Christian to be a very needy creature. The dependance of the beams on the sun is not more necessary, than the dependance of a Christian

on Christ: *Without me* (or *separate from me*) *ye can do nothing*, John xv. 5. The Christian's life is by a continual efflux from Christ; and is to be sought and maintained by a constant dependance on him, as light from the sun. Never was there, nor can there be a room so full of light from the sun-beams, but if either the sun withdraw his light, or if you exclude its light, by closing doors and windows, it immediately becomes dark, and that necessarily. It is so with all Christians. If it were not that the new covenant hath assured us, that there shall be no final and total separating of the fountain from the stream, there would soon be an expiring of all that good that is in the best of saints.

2dly, A Christian is always a needy creature; because he hath much work to do, and most necessary work, and all above his strength. He that hath most work, and least strength, is most needy of help: Phil. ii. 12, 13. *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* If the exhortation or command had been without the argument, it had been discouraging. What can a man do about his own salvation? *It is God that begun a good work in them, and will perform it till the day of Jesus Christ*, Phil. i. 6. Put hand to your work; for help is near. As the exhortation, *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*, hath the height of duty in it; so the argument, *For it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure*, doth deeply debase man's sufficiency, and highly advance both the sovereignty and efficacy of his assisting grace. And happy is that Christian, who can lay the weight of the command on his conscience, and can at the same time improve the encouragement for believing obeying. Whoever is void of sense of his need of God's assisting grace, looks not rightly on the great work lying before him, and seeth not the great weakness that is in him: 2 Cor. iii. 5. *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God.*

3dly, In this great work above his strength, the Christian meets with much opposition, both from within, and from without: not always in the same measure; but some always. Special measures of opposition, make times of special need;

of which I shall speak. But there is somewhat of opposition that is constant: Gal. v. 17. *For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* This *flesh* and this *spirit* is in all Christians. If a man were all *flesh*, he were no Christian; if he were all *spirit*, he would be perfect, as the saints glorified be. This *flesh* and *spirit lust and strive* one against the other: and so they must do; for they are *contrary the one to the other*. The effect of this *lusting* and *contrariety* is, that the Christian *cannot do the things that he would*. He cannot do all the *flesh* lusts to, because of the *spirit's* opposition; he cannot do all the *spirit* lusts after, because of the opposition of the *flesh*. Of this combat the apostle speaks largely from his own experience, Rom. vii. And the more opposition a Christian meets with, (and I have named but one head of it), the more needy is he of helping grace.

4*thly*, The Christian's state of absence from the Lord, renders him a needy creature. He is made for the Lord; framed so, that, as a Christian, nothing short of being for ever and immediately with the Lord reigns in his heart as his prize and mark, 2 Cor. v. 2, 4. *In this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.* What ails a believer to groan so oft and so deeply? It is to be in heaven with the Lord. And the more heavenly and holy a Christian be, the more frequent and earnest are these groanings. He hath the most healthy soul, who is sick of love: whose heart is sick with desires of being *present with the Lord*. The believer that is most assured of heaven, groans deepest. Unbelievers run on in sin, and sing to hell; while hell groans for them: and sad will the meeting be. We find Paul groaning for himself, only for two things; *the body of sin and death, its dwelling in him*, Rom. vii. 24. and his *dwelling in the body*. We do not, nor can we know the vast difference that is betwixt the happy state of the saints in heaven, and the best state of believers on earth. We do but guess in the dark; and our guesses are but negative; that they are removed from all the evils we find here; no sin, no clouds, no death, no

crying, nor any thing to complain of. But these negatives taken in by faith and experience, with the foretaste and first-fruits of that good land, make believers groan to be possessed of it, although they go, as Abraham did, Heb. xi. 8. *not knowing whither.* Heaven will be a blessed surprise to all the possessors of it. They will find it a far better state than their highest thoughts and largest desires could point forth.

But, besides these springs of constant need, there are special seasons of Christians need of God's grace. And they are easily known by this general rule. That time that comes on a believer, wherein he is in great and special danger, from which only present supplies of grace can preserve him, that is a season of special need of grace. And in the prospect of, or in such seasons, Christians should ply the throne of grace.

Of such times of need, I would speak to six of them. 1. The time of temptation. 2. Of a spiritual decay. 3. Of high enjoyments and attainments. 4. Of affliction. 5. Of special duty and service. 6. Of dying. These are all seasons and times of special need of God's grace. And how such render Christians needy of grace, and how helpful his grace is in such times, is all I mind to say on this scripture.

I. The first time of need, is *the time of temptation: An hour of temptation*, Rev. iii. 10. *A time of temptation*, Luke viii. 13. *A day of temptation*, Psal. xcv. 8. But because temptation is of large signification, and of sundry sorts, and from various quarters, I shall confine myself to that sort that is from Satan. And on this head would confine myself to these three: 1. What temptation is. 2. What need of grace to the tempted. 3. How grace helps in time of temptation.

1. *What is temptation?* As we are concerned in it, three things are in a temptation. An outward object, the occasion; inward corruption, that is as fuel for the temptation; and Satan's motion to sin, and his working on these two, to hatch sin. He is but twice called *the tempter;* first, when he came to Christ, Matth. iv. 3.; and again, when he comes to Christians, 1 Thess. iii. 5. These three are not necessarily in all temptations. In his tempting the first and second Adam, there was only an outward object, and a motion of Satan,

[illegible] these three are in all temptations. [illegible] the word gives the name of *tempta-* [illegible] vi. 9. *They that will be rich, fall* [illegible] of the poor or of the rich believe [illegible] *Every man is tempted, when he is drawn* [illegible] *Then when lust hath conceived,* [illegible] *when it is finished, bringeth forth* [illegible] difficulty is great in discovering Satan's [illegible] because there is inward corruption in men, [illegible] itself, as well as it is fit to be acted [illegible] temptation from Satan came to a sinless [illegible] might be easily known: but when it comes [illegible] hath an active principle of corruption in him, [illegible] the same sin that the tempter tempts un- [illegible] very hard to a man to say, "This motion is of [illegible] and "This is of my own corrupt heart." And [illegible] doth the devil get his due. Some blame the devil [illegible] deserves, and excuse themselves more than they [illegible] some excuse the devil, and blame themselves [illegible] they ought. What shall we do here? How shall [illegible] when temptation riseth from corruption within, or [illegible] devil without? There is no very great need to know [illegible] as in some cases it is very hard to know it. Temp- [illegible] natural to us, that if the devil be the first mover, [illegible] quickly on our corrupt heart, that we may justly [illegible] blame to ourselves. The workings of the Spirit of [illegible] the new creature, and of the spirit of Satan on the [illegible] are great mysteries. It is far wiser work to set about [illegible] our spiritual enemies, than to perplex ourselves [illegible] questions about their order. Therefore,

[illegible] *is there of the grace of God to help the tempted?* [illegible] plain. Every one that is in this case, knows his great [illegible] grace. Yet, to make them that are not in it pity [illegible] that are, and to direct them that are in it to entertain a [illegible] sense of their need of God's grace, I would shew how [illegible] a person under temptation is of the helping grace of God. This appears in these:—

1st, Our Lord Jesus Christ commands us to pray against temptation. He doth not so command us to pray against

affliction. In that pattern of prayer, Matth. vi. 9,—13. (the words whereof are better known, than the deep sense and meaning of the words is understood), there are but two petitions for spiritual blessings for ourselves. One is, for the pardon of sin, that relates to the state of our persons: the other is, for sanctification and preservation; and that is expressed thus, *Lead us not into temptation.* Sanctification is prayed for, in praying against temptation; and much of sanctification is acted in making such a prayer. But may not a man enter into temptation, and come well out of it again? Yes. But, in that case, more thanks is due to the Lord's grace and mercy, than to his own good conduct. Christ would have you to be afraid of temptation, and to pray against it: Matth. xxvi. 41. *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.* Whatever temptation a man rusheth confidently upon, he usually falls by. In temptation, no believer is safe, but the self-diffident and fearful; and fear of temptation acts in praying against it. Peter failed in his fearlessness. His going to the high-priest's hall after the warning his Master gave him, was rushing on a temptation; and so came on it. It must therefore be a case wherein one is very needy of grace to help, that Christ bids us pray against.

2dly, We find the whole armour of God is provided and prepared on purpose for the case of temptation, Ephesians vi. 10, 13. The apostle is sounding the alarm of war to all Christians. He shews them where their strength lies, ver. 10. *Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.* He shews them their weapons of war, ver. 10,—19. and tells them how to use them. Their armour is that of God. No armour but that that is from heaven, is proof against the batteries and assaults of hell. How doth the devil laugh at, despise, and pierce through that soul, whose armour is forged and framed on earth? This armour of God the Christian must *put on,* and *take to himself.* It is not enough that he know it, and have it lying by him. It is no armour to him, till it be put on by him. And why such armour, and so put on? ver. 12. Because of such dreadful enemies as we have to deal with: *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood,* (enemies formidable, and dangerous sufficiently against them that have no more

but flesh and blood to oppose them with), *but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* What but the whole armour of God can secure a poor believer from all the armies of hell?

3dly, Our blessed Lord Jesus *himself was tempted, that he might succour them that are tempted*, Heb. ii. 18. There are several states and conditions that believers are in that Christ himself was never in. We are oft sick and weak in body; Christ was always in sound and perfect health of body: for sickness is a consequent of inherent sin, and corruption of nature; and of that Christ had none. Many particular distresses we meet with, and wrestle with, that Christ knew not by his own experience. But this sad case of temptation he knew and felt. But, ye may say, if Christ had never been tempted, had he not been able to succour them that are tempted? Yes, no doubt; for no bounds can be set to his divine power as God. What then doth his experience of temptation signify to the succour of the tempted believer? It is the ground of his sympathy with them; and sympathy draws forth his helping grace. It is a ground for the faith of the tempted to act upon. How sweet is this thought to a Christian thus exercised: "I am indeed a tempted believer; but "I have a Saviour that was tempted himself, and remembers "it still, and pities them, and will help them that are in that "case, that was once so grievous to himself?"

4thly, A tempted person is needy of God's helping grace, because sin came in at first by temptation. Temptation was the door that sin came in by, and entered into the world of mankind. How sin came in upon the angels that fell, is deeper than that we can know it. And it is no great matter for us to be ignorant of it. We know they are now the worst, and most wicked, and most miserable of all the creatures; and that originally they were of the most eminent order (as one well said), "The Lord wisely would not de-"clare the nature of that disease he was resolved never to "cure." And so we must leave it in the dark. But as to sin's coming into the world of mankind, we have more light. The Lord created the root of mankind upright and perfect,

first the man, then the woman. In their created state, there was no sin in either of them. But temptation was so applied by Satan, that it quickly begot sin. This argument the apostle useth, 2 Cor. xi. 3. *I fear, lest by any means; as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.* If Satan did prevail to bring in sin by temptation upon the sinless and perfect; what may he not do on sinners, in whom he hath so much interest, and over whom he hath so great advantage by somewhat of his own in them?

5thly, There is great need of the grace of God in a time of temptation, because of the frequent sad effects of temptation, unless present help of grace be given. Rarely doth a temptation and our hearts meet but some fire of sin is kindled. I would name a few of those effects of temptation.

(1.) Temptation doth often discover hid and unseen evil, and brings it to light. It brings forth that which the person, before the temptation, never thought was in him. So it is with the ungodly, and the godly themselves. When Hazael was told by the prophet Elisha, what mischief he would do to Israel, he said, 2 Kings viii. 13. *But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? But* (saith Elisha) *the Lord hath shewed me, that thou shalt be king over Syria.* "Then "thou wilt have power, and will to do it." What wickedness will not that man do, whom Satan tempts, and whom God leaves? David fell dreadfully by temptation. And so did Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. *Howbeit, in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.* When the vessel is broached by a convenient temptation, that liquor will come out that was never thought to be within. When *Herod feared John and observed*, or *preserved him;* when, on his *hearing him, he did many things, and heard him gladly;* who would have thought he would have beheaded him? Mark vi. 20, 21. But a *convenient day came;* a day when Herod lay fair for temptation; and a day that Satan, and Herodias and her daughter, his servants, laid the temptation before him: then the poor wretch was soon overcome. But indeed it was

more strange, that such a king as Herod should hear such a prophet as John Baptist preach, than that he should murder him. At least, it is, and hath been far more usual to bad kings, to slay prophets, than to hear them gladly. Peter was so confident in his courage, that, in a manner, (though against both grace and good manners), he gives the lie to his Master, Matth. xxvi. 31,—35. *Then said Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night.* Ver. 33. *Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.* As if he had said, "Lord, at least except me out of this all thou speakest of." Because he would not take the general warning, Christ gives him a particular one, ver. 34. *Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.* Will not Peter believe Christ speaking so peremptorily and plainly? No: ver. 35. *Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee,* (or *for thy sake*, as John xiii. 37.), *yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.* So loth and backward are even godly men to own that to be in them, that they do not see and feel at present working in them. These words Peter and the rest spoke, (bating that awful fear that should have seized on them, from such a warning as Christ gave them), were words of duty; and were doubtless the honest expressions of their present thoughts. Yet when the temptation came, Christ's warning took place, and their resolutions vanished like smoke. They *all forsook him and fled.* Peter followed afterward, and denied him shamefully. The voice of a damsel overthrew this man, that had courage to draw his sword in his Master's defence against armed men, John xviii. 10. He denied he knew his dear Master; when, if he had owned him, and himself as his servant, there was no danger. John was there, and at the cross too, without any harm.

(2.) Temptation often brings on a great and sudden damp and eclipse on the work of God's grace in the heart. It is as the smoke of hell in the soul, that darkens the room; so that a believer cannot see what of God is in him. It is, as Christ calls it, Luke xxii. 31. *a sifting a man as wheat.* Wheat, and chaff, and dust, are then mingled together. No believer

in this case can give such a clear and distinct account, nor have so plain a discovery of God's work in him, as before and after the temptation. Christians give the devil the advantage he seeks, when they judge of themselves and their state in the fit of a temptation. Act grace diligently when in temptation, and try your state as carefully as you can when you are out of temptation.

(3.) Temptation increaseth greatly and suddenly, seen and known corruption. If temptation come on a latent hid corruption, it may bring it forth: but if it come on a known corruption, though it was not so powerful before, temptation will make it rage. The temptation came on Judas. For as hateful as his name is justly to all Christians; yet, before he fell, no man suspected him; only Christ knew him. When Christ gave the warning, John xiii. 21. that *one of the twelve should betray him;* all the eleven said, *Is it I?* And at last the traitor said so; and was answered, Matth. xxvi. 21,—25. The lust the devil acted on, was his covetousness. He was a thief, a lover of money; and the devil put him at last upon a bargain that was his ruin. For a servant to betray his master, and such a master; for a sinner to sell the Saviour of all sinners that are saved, for so inconsiderable a sum, after so fair a warning of his sin and ruin by it, was a proof of the mighty power of temptation over a man. The apostle Peter chargeth Ananias thus, Acts v. 3. *Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?* The *filling of his heart* was Satan's work, as Peter saith: Why then doth he ask the man an account of, or charge him with Satan's action? Because the devil can fill no man's heart with a sinful purpose, till the man give way to, and comply with the devil's working.

3. *What is that help that grace gives to the tempted?* We have heard how temptation renders a man needy of grace; now let us consider how this grace can, and doth help in this case. Paul, in his temptation, 2 Cor. xii. 7, 8, 9. betakes himself to the right course? to prayer to the Lord; and *thrice he besought the Lord, that it might depart from him.* He is answered, *My grace is sufficient for thee.* We would be apt to think, that Paul's great stock of grace, and manifold expe-

grace of God into wantonness. The instances of his devices are innumerable. The multitude and danger of his wiles must be great, if we consider, 1. His created state: a spirit more knowing than man. A sinless angel is a higher creature than sinless Adam was. 2. By his fall he hath lost happiness and purity; but retains his knowledge, which his corruption hath turned into craft, malice, and wiles. 3. His long experience in cheating of men. 4. That in men that his wiles are proposed to. It is to *the heart, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*, Jer. xvii. 9. It is to *the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts*, Eph. iv. 22. Such a devil dealing with such a deceitful heart, must have many dangerous wiles. Christ's grace only can enable a man to discern them; and it should be much prayed for. Many have been skilful in the theory and knowledge of the doctrine of Satan's wiles, that have been, notwithstanding, prevailed upon by them. A man must know his own heart well, and observe its motions narrowly, and be much at the throne of grace, that would know Satan's particular wiles on himself.

2dly, Grace helps the tempted, in helping to hate the sin they are tempted to. Many believers, though they cannot tell well whence the wind comes that drives them, whether from their own heart, or the devil; yet they know whither it drives them; to sin that they are averse from. Tempted Joseph spake like a man that had present assistance of grace, when he said, Gen. xxxix. 9. *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* As far, and as long, as the sin tempted to, stands black and ugly in the eye of the tempted person; so far, and so long, is the temptation ineffectual. Temptation prevails, when the sin tempted to takes with the heart and will; James i. 14. *A man is tempted*, (*i. e.* successfully,) *when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.* Sin was without him, but near to him by the temptation; now it is within him, and it is his sin. The temptation to numbering of the people, took with David; but his command about it was *abominable to Joab*, a man far short of David's grace, if he had any, 1 Chron. xxi. 6.

3dly, Grace can help the tempted to *resist and stand*, Eph. vi. 13. No man is overcome of Satan till he flee and yield.

Resisting is overcoming of him: Jam. iv. 7. *Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* 1 Pet. v. 9. *Whom resist, stedfast in the faith.* Eph. vi. 16. *Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the devil.* They are *darts*, they are the *devil's darts*, they are *fiery darts*, there is an *all* of them; yet by faith you may be able to *quench* them all. Why is so much said of faith? Because, as Christ's strength is the believer's strength, so faith is that only in a believer that acts on this strength, draws it in, and acts in it. Separate faith from its object, Christ, either in justification or in sanctification, and it becomes an imagination, a vanity, a nothing. Now, consider how cunningly Satan deals with believers, and how simply they are gulled by him in temptation. He persuades, and often prevails with them, to lay aside *the shield of faith*, when they should mainly use it. How foolish were that man that would yield his arms to an implacable enemy? Christ knew Peter's danger, and provides graciously for it: *I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not*, Luke xxii. 32.

4thly, The helping grace of God assists tempted believers, in preventing an utter foil by Satan, and in recovering them from a begun foil. So did Christ for Peter; and Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9. The devil never gets all his will on a believer: nor are any wounds he gives to a saint, mortal in the issue; whatever they be in their own nature, in believers fears, or in the devil's design. All the glory is due to the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

5thly, lastly, Grace can rebuke the tempter, and call him off. This Joshua the high-priest needed and got: Zech. iii. 2. *And the Lord said unto Satan*, (who was *standing at Joshua's right hand to resist him*, when he is *standing before the angel of the Lord*, ver. 1.) *The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?* This mercy was the first thing in Paul's prayer, 2 Cor. xii. 8. *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.* This messenger of Satan was of Christ's sending and giving: *There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me*, ver. 7. "Lord "save us from such gifts," will Christians be apt to say.

There is no reason to pray for them. If the Lord see them needful, he will send them. But it is comfortable, that all the devil's assaults are of Christ's ordering. He must have Christ's leave to tempt, Luke xxii. 31.; and our Lord, when he pleaseth, can, and will call him off. When Christ was tempted, Matth. iv. he resists all his temptations by the word, as his people should: at last he put forth his divine power, ver. 10. *Get thee hence, Satan,* &c. *Then the devil leaveth him,* ver. 11. This we cannot do, but Christ can do it for us. It is a blessed promise, Rom. xvi. 20. *The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.* Poor tempted Christians think, that they are not only in Satan's sieve, and in his hands, but that they are often under his feet. But lift up your heads by faith on this promise. Complete victory is coming; and the faith of it should not only encourage you to resist, but this faith is a present victory: *Faith is our victory,* 1 John v. 4. The believer (not only shall be, but) is an overcomer.

SERMON XI.

HEB. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

THE Lord hath been pleased so to order and determine the state and condition of his children, while they are in this life, that they shall be constantly needy. This dispensation we should submit unto with all quietness of mind, not quarrelling with the wisdom and mercy of our God therein. Yea, more than submission is called for. There is a further duty required, though it be hard to perform it, to take pleasure and to rejoice in this needy state, that the power of Christ may rest upon us. For as the Lord hath laid us, or left us, under manifold necessities; so hath he laid up, and is ready to lay out, of his grace for helping us under them. And surely such wants as lay us open for those supplies of his grace, will be

found to have a great deal of mercy in them, in the issue. The exhortation in the text implies, that grace can help in every time of need. There are some times of need, contrived by the Lord on purpose, that the helpfulness of his grace might the more shine and appear. I was speaking last day from this truth, *That there are some special necessitous times, in which believers are specially needy of Christ's grace, and in which his grace is specially helpful.*

I have spoke to the first of these times of need: *A time of temptation.* Though all believers be not always tempted; yet there is no saint on earth who is out of the devil's gun-shot. No saint on earth hath reason to expect, that (if I may so speak) God should serve the devil with a *Noli prosequi.* God gives not, in this life, an utter discharge to the devil, from meddling with, or molesting of any saint. Till we come to heaven, this adversary must be expected and prepared for. This world is his dominion; he is the *wicked god* of it, 2 Cor. iv. 4. And all the wicked in it, are his people, subjects, and children: and all the remaining corruption in the saints, is of the devil.

II. The second time of special need of God's grace, is *the time of a spiritual decay;* a decay in the new creature, a decay in the work of God in the heart. This passeth under many names in the word, and well known in the sense and experience of believers. Sometimes it is called *darkness,* Isa. l. 10. It is the misery of a natural state, that they that are in it, are *darkness.* It is the blessedness of a renewed state, that the partakers of it *are light in the Lord.* Their duty is, to *walk as children of light,* Eph. v. 8. Though they that are made *light in the Lord,* are never suffered to become darkness again; yet they may *walk in darkness, and have no light;* and the *days of that darkness* may be *many,* as the wise man saith, Eccl. xi. 8. We all know what natural darkness is. All the natural light of the world is from the sun; and therefore natural light and darkness, day and night, have their vicissitudes and revolutions, according to the shining or not shining of the sun. All the spiritual light believers have, is from the light of God's countenance. As *the Sun of Righteousness* ariseth on them,

Israel to go in and possess the land, Numb. xiv. 9. by this, *Their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not.* It is from this bad case that believers are in, that Satan hath so easy and speedy victory over them at some times, more than at other times. When it is well with the new creation within, Christians can keep the devil at a bay and stand; when it is otherwise, he prevails immediately; we are disarmed, and his darts pierce and enter. There is some ground to suspect, that David's heart was not in so good a frame as usually, some time before his foul fall, 2 Sam xi. As to Peter, it is plain, his vain self-confidence gave Satan an opportunity to sift him, as he did.

3. *How doth the grace of God help in a decayed state?*

1*st*, Grace helps, in preserving life at the root. There is some witness for God kept up. *I sleep, but my heart waketh*, saith the bride, Song v. 2. It is well all was not asleep. *The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*, saith meek Jesus, in his agony in the garden, to the three distempered disciples, Matth. xxvi. 41. These same three sleep in the mount of transfiguration, Luke ix. 32. and in the garden of agony. Paul found this witness preserved in his captivity to the law in his members, Rom. vii. 23.

2*dly*, Grace helps under a decayed state, by making a secret growth downward: A growth, that the believer cannot feel in himself, and that others cannot quickly perceive; yet it is a real growth, and will in God's due time appear. We commonly value most that growth in grace that hath fair blossoms and fruit, appearing to our comfort, and to the Lord's praise before others. And it is indeed desirable, and to be studied, Matth. v. 16. John xv. 8. But there is a growth that may be carried on in the root only, in the rooting grace of a Christian: as in clearer discoveries of indwelling sin in the heart, and in more self-diffidence and self-distrust. Paul had this fruit, 2 Cor. i. 8, 9. It is a sad thing, that many Christians are so fond of themselves, of the good that is in them, that the Lord seeth that nothing is so fit to cure them of this, as leaving them to themselves. And when this leaving of them to themselves hath brought them to a discovery of themselves,

and that discovery hath wrought a distrust of themselves, and that distrust hath taught them faith in God; then the Lord hath reached his end on them, and will change his way with them.

3dly, Grace can revive the decayed state of a believer: Psal. xxiii. 3. *He restoreth my soul. He reneweth their strength*, Isa. xl. 31. *Thy youth is renewed like the eagles*, Psal. ciii. 5. This is impossible in nature, and as to our bodies; but as to our souls, and the work of God in them, it is what is promised, and often done. Old people may, and do often, in their folly and vanity, counterfeit youth; but all their arts cannot make themselves one hour younger. But the Lord can renew the youth of the new creature, and make it better with him than ever it was. David prays for it, Psal. li. 10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.* Peter got a new conversion, Luke xxii. 32. They both had been converted and renewed before; but they fell under a sad decay, and needed this restoring grace, and got it.

So much of the second time of need. I proceed to a third, not so common.

III. *A time of special enjoyments*, is a time of special need of God's helping grace. You may think it strange, but it is true, that they that receive most of the Lord's gracious bounty, stand in most need of grace to guide it well. Concerning this season, I would speak in five particulars.

1. Most Christians know what those enjoyments are by experience, although in various measures. It is very suspicious, that that person is an hypocrite, that is always in the same frame, let him pretend it to be never so good. The true Christian's sky is never long clear, and without clouds. Change of weather and ways, is usually found by travellers to heaven. It is to be suspected, that he is not right who *hath no changes*, Psal lv. 19. These special enjoyments are of several sorts.

1st, There is some special nearness to God enjoyed by Christians at some times. We are not at all to be offended at, but rather confirmed by the reproaches of the ungodly, that are utter strangers to such enjoyments, and cannot endure nor understand the scripture-names of such blessings that they

themselves are unacquained with. What is more frequent in the word, than this nearness to God? What is better known in the experience of saints than this nearness? He makes gracious approaches to mens spirits, and causeth them to approach to him, Psal. lxv. 4. They find it good for them, Psal. lxxiii. 28. The first gracious change wrought on a soul, is by bringing a distant sinner near to God: Eph. ii. 13. *But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.* "Whenever the virtue of that blood came "upon you by the Spirit of Christ, God came near to you, and "you were brought near to God." But besides this nearness that is begun in the first application of grace, and changeth their state; there is more nearness given by the Lord, and enjoyed by his people, for the cheering of their hearts, and bettering of their frame. Exercised Christians are able to give a distinct account of their having of this nearness at some times, and of their want of it at other times. How much of both are in the Psalms of David? And such as can understand the nearness to, and distance from God, so frequently mentioned there; as only the psalmist's sense of God's favourable or cross providence towards him in outward things, are to be pitied for their ungodly ignorance, and despised for their expounding the words of a man after God's heart according to the carnal sentiments of their own.

2dly, There are effusions of the Spirit spoke of in the word, and found by Christians, which are special enjoyments. Sometimes they are found in the performance of spiritual duties of worship; sometimes in the exercise of grace. Grace should be acted in all duties of worship; but it may be, and should be acted out of any formal duty. You should never pray, but there should be acting of faith and love on Christ. But, God be thanked, you may act faith and love when ye do not pray, when you are about no settled spiritual duty of worship. There is a *being in the fear of the Lord all the day long*, Prov. xxiii. 17. A *walking up and down in the name of the Lord*, Zech. x. 12. A *doing of every thing in the name of the Lord Jesus*, Col. iii. 17. Every believer hath the Spirit of Christ: *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*, Rom. viii. 9. But there are some singular pourings out

of this Spirit promised and bestowed, and well known by believers? and they are precious enjoyments. *This Spirit the world cannot receive; because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you*, as Christ saith, John xiv. 17.

3dly, There is communion and fellowship with God much poke of in the word, well known by believers, 1 John i. 3. But I shall name no more of these enjoyments.

2. As all Christians know what these special enjoyments are, so all of them do greatly desire them. This is so sure, that many do over-desire them. This desire ariseth,

1*st*, From the genius and instinct of the new nature. What is more natural to the new creature, than kindly breathing after heaven? When a poor soul hath got of the water of life from Christ, it *becomes in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life*, John iv. 14. Immediately the soul saith, "What shall I do to be saved? when shall I be saved?" Now, if desires of heaven be the native breathing of the new creature, surely breathing after much of heaven upon earth must be so too; for the highest enjoyments of God on earth, are far short of what is reserved for heaven.

2dly, Experience of first love, and of the first gracious welcome he gave to the believer, when he first fled to the city of refuge, makes them desire more of those enjoyments.

3. These special enjoyments are very profitable, as well as pleasing. They are given for profit, and do usually profit.

1*st*, They are supported under tribulation: *In the multitude of my thoughts within me*, (and doubtless they were sad ones), *thy comforts delight my soul*, Psalm xciv. 19. Usually *much affliction*, and *joy of the Holy Ghost*, are together, 1 Thess. i. 6. The promises are fitted for distress, and the performance of them given to Christians under it. Some distresses are so great, that nothing can bear up under them, but a special appearance of divine grace; and in that case such blessings may be more importunately begged.

2dly, Special enjoyments do fit and strengthen for work and service. There is a *joy of the Lord* that is the believer's *strength*, Neh. viii. 10. Elijah's double meal was to strengthen him for a forty days journey in the wilderness; and the

extraordinary manifestation he had of God, was to fit him for his translation, 1 Kings xix. Many saints have found this so often in their experience, that they do with fear receive singular enjoyments of God, because they have so oft found them followed with some special trial and difficulty.

4. Although most Christians have somewhat of these special enjoyments, and all desire them, and they be profitable in themselves; yet special spiritual enjoyments are dangerous, and render a man very needy of the helping grace of God.

1st, Because they do usually expose to special temptations. Satan is a constant enemy to all Christians. But there are two times especially that he would fainest assault the believer; when he is at his worst, and when he is at his best. Let believers be never so low, if Satan get his will, he would bring them lower. No man is as low as the devil would have him, but he that is in hell; but thither he cannot bring a believer. If a Christian be never so high, if the devil be let loose upon him, he will quickly bring him down. Do not think, that the devil will fear to engage a believer, even when in his best state. He that had the boldness to fall on sinless Adam in paradise, will think it an easy matter to deal with any sinful man in this wilderness. He that had the impudence to tempt our almighty sinless Saviour, will he have either modesty or fear in tempting a feeble believer? You whom the Lord makes at any time to ride on your high places, bless him, and yet fear your adversary.

2dly, There are some special corruptions that are apt to grow under special enjoyments, as weeds by warm sunshine. If there were any such enjoyment of God to be found in this life as would remove corruption altogether out of the heart, there would be no fear of abusing it: but now, when the greatest enjoyments that can be had in this life, are given to them that have a body of death dwelling in them, there are some workings of that remaining corruption that are very ready to appear in this case. As,

(1.) Pride of heart; spiritual pride. All pride is a spiritual sin; but pride that riseth on spiritual blessings received, is specially spiritual pride. Pride on the account of

beauty of body, or strength, or riches, is a carnal foolish pride. If it rise on the account of gifts and endowments of the mind, it grows yet a worse pride. But if the gifts of God be yet of a more high and noble kind, as his special love, and the precious fruits of that love, in begun conformity to Christ, and communion with him; if pride rise on such grounds, it is yet the worst of all sorts of pride. For the more gracious the gifts of God be, and the more eminently they be of free distinguishing grace, and the more plainly the design of God in giving those gifts be to glorify the grace of the giver, and to save the receiver, to the praise of that grace; pride of heart on the account of such gifts, is yet the worst of all pride. Now, that such a corruption may grow under special enjoyments of God, is past all doubt. 2 Cor. xii. Paul speaks of his being lifted up unto heaven, like a man that had not fully recovered himself: *I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether out of the body, or in the body, I know not: God knoweth)*, ver. 2. It was a long while since; but in the time of the enjoyment, and fourteen years after it; he could not tell whether he was in or out of the body. He never speaks plainly of it, till he came to speak of his infirmities, ver. 7. *Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.* Where we may perceive plainly, that whatever was in that extraordinary enjoyment Paul had in that vision from heaven, or in that visit to heaven, that was allowed him; when he came back, he found the same heart he had formerly felt, and the same body of death he so often had groaned under before. Although we know not what Paul enjoyed in that time, nor what the nature of that exercise by Satan was that he was put to: yet the Lord's design, and Paul's danger, is plain. It is indeed a marvellous passage. Such an extraordinary person as Paul was, the chief of the apostles, and most eminent saint in all the New Testament, after such a great revelation, must be exercised with hell, to prevent harm by his being in heaven, before he was fully ready and fit for heaven.

(2.) Contentedness with a present good condition, and dul-

ness of desires after a better state, is a common corruption that is apt to rise up under special enjoyments. If the disciples be on the mount of transfiguration, and Christ be glorified in their sight, and glorified saints from heaven in his company; then *it is good to be here*, say they; not minding that which was more needful for them and all the church. And if they heard (as is most likely) the discourse of Moses and Elias concerning *the decease* of our Lord *which he should accomplish at Jerusalem*, Luke ix. 30, 31. they were the more faulty. It is very hard to be truly desirous of heaven, when we have much of heaven on earth; yet it may be attained, and grace can help to it. Of which in the last place.

5. The grace of God, as it is needed, so it is useful and helpful to believers under special enjoyments.

1*st*, Grace can humble the soul under them, and by them. Though Satan make them temptations to pride, the Lord can sanctify them to be means of humbling. Great comforts do not natively tend to humble us; but all discoveries of the glory of God are humbling. Isaiah found it so, Isaiah vi. 5. *Wo is me, for I am undone; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.* The vision was great and glorious; it was a sight of God in Christ; as John xii. 41. *These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.* We would be apt to think the prophet should rather have said, "Happy "am I, that I have seen now what I never saw before, what "few, if any, besides me, have seen." But such was the impression the Spirit of God made on the heart of this man, that this extraordinary manifestation of God affects him with more deep self-abasement than ever he had before. Happy is the man that lies still the more low in himself, and before God, the more highly the Lord exalts him. Job found this fruit of a clearer discovery of God, chap. xlii. 5, 6. *Jacob* (in Gen. xxxii. 30.) *called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.* This place where he wrestled all night with the Lord, where the Lord blessed him in the morning; this place he calls *Peniel*, to be the name of it to him and his seed; that whenever they saw the place, or heard of it, they might remember, that there the great God and a poor man met in great familiarity, and

the man was not consumed. Jacob wonders, that his life was preserved in such a meeting. Near approaches of God to his children, are sometimes too hard for them to bear. This made one eminent saint cry out under such a high enjoyment, "O Lord, destroy me not with thy glory;" and another, "Hold thy hand, O Lord; thy servant is a "clay vessel, and can bear no more." And both these were persons not oppressed by his wrath, but overcharged with his love and glory.

2dly, Grace can help to record and remember special enjoyments. There are some spiritual enjoyments of God, that are like lightning, that dart from the one end of heaven to the other, that make a dark night to become like the morning. They come quickly, and they are quickly gone; they are of speedy access, and of as sudden a recess. But though they be but short in their continuance, their fruit may remain. And one way for making their fruit continue, is, to remember and record them. *I will remember the years, the works, the wonders of the Lord*, Psalm lxxvii. 10, 11, 12. *I will meditate, I will talk of them*, saith the saint. Thus David prays for Israel, 1 Chron. xxix. 18. *Keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people.* What was this he prayed for Israel's remembering of, and for the Lord's keeping in their minds? It was, that they might remember with what joy they made their willing offerings for the service of God. We have a gracious promise of Christ, John xiv. 26. *The Holy Ghost shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* And this promise we should plead, for bringing to our remembrance the things Christ hath done for us, as well as for what he hath said to us. And no man can imagine (but they that feel it) how one of these remembrances will fortify the soul in a day of distress. Spiritual things are so unlike to carnal things, that all comparisons betwixt them must needs halt greatly. That a poor, hungry, starving man, should, in a dungeon, or desolate wilderness, be refreshed, and made strong, by the bare remembrance of a feast he had seven years ago; this is impossible in nature. But in spiritual things it is otherwise. The savoury remembrance of a spiritual enjoyment long since

past, can bring back the taste, and power, and virtue of it, to the soul that wants it. Believers are usually upon their recovery from a sad disconsolate state, when they are exercised in remembering with savour their former enjoyments. Thus saith returning Israel, Hosea ii. 7. *I will go and return to my first husband: for then it was better with me than now.*

3dly, Grace can help to improve enjoyments, to desires of, and endeavours after perfection. We must not say, when it is well with us, *It is good to be here;* but rather, *It is good to be there, where it will be a great deal better.* Phil. iii. 13, 14. *This one thing I do*, (it must be a great thing doubtless that is Paul's *one thing*), *forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark*, &c. There is a *forgetting* that is our duty; and a *remembering* that is our duty also. To *remember*, so as to support our faith, and feed our praising of the Lord, that is duty: but to *forget* attainments, so as to press after the mark, that is another duty. Alas! we are bad, both at right *remembering*, and right *forgetting*. You and I think, that if we had but a little of what Paul had in one day; if we had but a little of what he had that night he lay in the stocks, when he *prayed, and sang praises unto God*, Acts xvi. 25. we could never have forgotten it as long as we had a day to live. But Paul could forget all in his ardent desires of perfection. And so must you; and this grace can teach you.

These special enjoyments of God are but rarely felt. Dote not on them, neither despise them. Mock not such as know them in their experience, though ye do not. If you be sound believers, ye may live in your souls, and live to his praise, without enjoying any thing very extraordinary. But if the Lord grant singular communications of himself, know that it is a season of special need of grace to guide them well. They would return more frequently, and would rise and spring higher, and last longer, if they were better improved. The greater the blessing be, the more provoking is the abuse of it; the greater the blessing be, the greater is the difficulty of guiding it well: and the more difficulty be in our work, the more is our need of the grace of God; and the more frequent and fervent should our applications be to the throne of grace for that needful, helpful grace.

SERMON XII.

HEB. iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

HAVING spoke of the need of God's grace, and of its helpfulness in general; I came to condescend on some seasons wherein the grace of God is specially needful and helpful. Of them I named six; three of which I have spoke to, and the other three remain to be handled.

1. The first season named, was *the time of temptation.* There was never a believer so little beloved of Christ, as to be given up as a prey to Satan; and never lay a believer so near Christ's heart, but the devil may get him into his sieve. Therefore let us never flatter ourselves in a state of security from disturbance by the devil. Blessed be God, we are brought into a state of safety from ruin by him.

2. A *season of spiritual decay:* soul sickness, a weakness in the new creature. There are some people that never knew by experience what bodily sickness means, but have enjoyed perfect health all their life. But I am apt to think, that few, if any Christians, find it so as to the new creation in them.

3. A *season of special enjoyments.* Though these two seem to be very far from, and contrary to one another; yet they agree in this, that in both grace is needful and helpful. The unaccountable wisdom and sovereignty of the Lord our God, shines in his conduct of his people. Some of them have extraordinary receivings; others know little what they mean. There are some Christians, whose way to heaven lies all along in the depths and in the vales, when others ride on their high places. Now, these singular manifestations from God, though desirable and profitable, yet are not without special dangers. To prevent which, the Lord provides and ministers special physic to them: and it is strong and unpleasant; but the physician can bless it; as Paul's experience witnesseth, 2 Cor. xii. He had been in heaven, he knew not how; he

had heard, he could not tell what when he came back. But he well knew what he met with on his return, and how needful and useful it was for him. Lest he should be exalted above measure with what he had seen and heard in paradise, hell is sent to humble him. May we not infer this, How unfit are believers, while in the body, and a body of death is in them, to be in heaven, when any special enjoyment of heaven must have so dreadful a remedy administered to prevent hurt?

IV. A fourth season of special need of grace, is *the time of affliction.* Afflictions are of many sorts and kinds. I am apt to believe, that though there be some likeness in the afflictions of many, yet every afflicted man hath a particular affliction of his own. As it is with people's faces, so it is with their crosses. For as many thousand faces as are amongst mankind, though all are somewhat like, yet every one hath some distinction. The world is full of crosses; yet every afflicted person hath his own cross. Our Lord hints at it, Matth. xvi. 24. *Let a man take up his cross.* The Lord appoints a proper cross for every one: though people are ready to think and say, that their cross is unfit for them, and that they would bear another cross better. In crosses we must neither chuse nor refuse. David's case was singular, 2 Sam. xxiv. The Lord chuseth for us, and we must not, cannot refuse: Job xxxiv. 33. *Should it be according to thy mind? he will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou chuse, and not I: therefore speak what thou knowest.* There is a general distinction of afflictions. Some are *from God's hand*, for *sin*, or *trial*, or *prevention:* and some are *from man's hand*, for *Christ's sake*, and the *gospel's*. In all of them grace is helpful and needful. But I would speak only something in general, that every one may apply to themselves according to their experience and exercise; and that on these two heads: 1. The needfulness of grace to the afflicted. 2. The helpfulness of grace to the afflicted, whatever their affliction be.

1. I would speak of *the need of the grace of God to the afflicted.* Some sense of this is engraven on the hearts of men by the light of nature. The Heathen mariners in the storm express this, Jonah i. 5, 6. *What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call*

upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. A sad case! A Heathen shipmaster challenging a godly prophet for his neglect of seeking God! He calls him by a shameful, but well-deserved name, *O sleeper.* The storm came on for Jonah's sake, as he told them, ver. 12.: yet he is the securest person in the ship. He only knew God, yet he is last in calling on him. An honest Pagan may outdo a distempered prophet, in some things, at some times. This sense was expressed greatly by the king, nobles, and inhabitants of Nineveh, Jonah iii. 5,—10. And they again go far beyond Jonah. They *believed God* on Jonah's preaching, *repented, prayed,* and *fasted;* and *the Lord repented of the evil.* But Jonah was not grieved at all, chap. iv. 1, 2. If it were not for his excellent prayer, chap. ii. and that he was a prophet of the Lord, and the penman of the Holy Ghost, to record his own sin and shame, for the benefit of the church; we should be tempted to question this man's grace, of whose fearful sins we have so large an account. He rebels against the Lord's call to preach to Nineveh. When he flees, the Lord overtakes him by a storm, takes him by the lot; he is cast into the sea, schooled in the whale's belly three days and three nights; a miraculous chastisement, and a miraculous preservation. He now obeys the repeated call. But when his labour had a gracious effect, he is displeased exceedingly, and prays most sinfully. Jonah's instance should teach ministers and Christians to pray more, *Lord, lead us not into temptation.* As nature's light teacheth afflicted people their need of the Lord's grace and mercy, the word declares it more plainly, James v. 13. Psal. l. 15. Hos. v. 15. This need of the helping grace of God in affliction, I would instruct in these:—

1*st*, Affliction-sins are readily fallen into without the help of the grace of God. Such sins, I mean, that affliction doth easily and naturally tempt unto; as fretting, impatience, murmuring, and quarrelling with the hand of God. It is sadly and frequently seen, that affliction hath not only brought along with it discovery of sin, but also the actings and workings of more corruption, than either the person himself, or any else, thought was in the man. It was a sad character of a very bad man, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. *And in the time of his distress*

did he trespass yet more against the Lord: this is that king Ahaz. This is a man noted for a never-do-well. A brother in the same office, and in the same iniquity, said, *Behold this evil is of the Lord; what, should I wait for the Lord any longer?* 2 Kings vi. 33.

2dly, Affliction-duties are only practicable by the help of the grace of God. Every cross hath its work, as well as its trial. There is that required and called for in affliction, that craves a special assistance of the grace of God for the doing of it. It is remarkable, that the great duty of the afflicted is expressed by two negatives, Heb. xii. 5. from Prov. iii. 11. *My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.* What then is the positive duty? It is that which is neither of these two. If the affliction be light, we are apt to despise it; and if it be heavy, we are as apt to faint under it. But, saith the Holy Ghost, see that ye do neither. If it be never so light, do not despise it; if it be never so heavy, faint not under it. And there is no small need of grace to preserve us from those extremes, and to keep us in the right midst.

3dly, The consolations of an afflicted state are very needful, and grace only can furnish us with them. Be ye assured of it, that never did a Christian bear up patiently under God's heavy hand, but by the strong secret working of some consolation. It is true, we value and seek most that consolation that comes in as a great flood of sense, and that doth swallow up the bitterness of affliction. This the Lord can, and sometimes doth give to his people. But there is a secret, silent spring of consolation, that is as profitable, and more common in the Lord's way with his children. Of this the apostle speaks in 2 Cor. i. 3, 4, 5. *Everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace*, are his blessings, 2 Thess. ii. 16, 17.

2. *Wherein doth the helpfulness of grace consist, in an afflicted state?*

1st, God's grace helps with light to know God's mind in affliction. It is dreadful to be struck in the dark, when a man neither seeth the path he walks in, nor the hand that smiteth him, nor the weapon he is smote with. The great blessing that grace can help us to, is, to know what the rod

ieans, what its voice is, who hath appointed it, and what of 'od's name is written on the rod, Micah vi. 9. Job was very rnest for this light, Job x. 2. *I will say unto God, Do not ndemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.* Elihu viseth him well, Job xxxiv. 31, 32. *Surely it is meet to be id unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any re. That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done ini- ity, I will do no more.* Many a poor believer has been put this, that if he had all the world, he would have parted th it, to have known God's mind in his afflictions. Some- ies by the light of the furnace, we come to know our hearts l corruptions, and thereby what God smites for, and calls

The Lord can, by the teachings of his word and Spirit, l by the wisdom of his providential dispensations, engrave t particular meaning that is in his heart, on the rod that is his hand, that men may know it. And happy is that per- ı that is so dealt with. But it is indeed harder to be sin- ely willing to know and admit of God's mind in affliction, n it is to find it out. But his grace can help to both, and throne of grace should be much plied for both.

2dly, Grace can give in strength and support under afflic- ı: 2 Cor. iv. 16. *For which cause we faint not; but though outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by* . It is a wonderful thing, to see how much pain, sickness, torment, a poor frail body is able to bear. We think r close and sticking a thing is life, that is not squeezed by such a stress. Yet the frailty of the flesh, in bearing distress of the flesh, is a small thing, in regard of the lty of the heart in bearing of God's rebukes: Prov. xviii. *The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded it who can bear?* Yet many have borne it; but surely by ne support. It is the common sense of distressed Chris- s, that they have been put to bear such burdens; that r thought at first would surely have crushed them. The ion of their wonder is, because the weight of the burden n them was sensible; but *the everlasting arms underneath* n and their burden, were not seen, Deut. xxxiii. 27.

3dly, Grace helps in affliction, by enabling the afflicted to ieve, that there is love in the afflicter. He saith it, Rev.

iii. 19. *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten;* and he can make us believe it. Nothing but his mighty grace can do it. Nothing is liker anger than affliction, especially when severe. Nothing is more difficult to believe, than that which, to all our sense and reason, is ruining to us, should be in love in him that doth it. Who can believe this without the help of grace? and how great must that help be, that enableth a man to believe so unlikely a thing?

4thly, Grace helps in affliction, by teaching to profit thereby: Heb. xii. 11. *Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby.* The fruit of sanctified affliction is a great mystery, as all spiritual fruit is. You cannot tell how you profit by the word: I am afraid, that there is but little profiting at all; but they that do profit, cannot tell how they profit. They may see the seed sown, they may find it sown in their hearts, they may perceive its fruits in their worship and walk; but how the grace of God works with the word in making them profit, is too deep for the most discerning Christians. It is some way more mysterious, how the Lord works out profit by afflictions. It is indeed often found, blessed be his name. Many can say with David, Psal. cxix. 67. *Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.* Ver. 71. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.* But none can tell how the grace of God makes the bitter seed of affliction bring forth the peaceable fruit of righteousness. And where is that saint, who, when the Lord is writing bitter things against him, and multiplying his wounds, can say in faith, "Now, at this time, and in this manner, the "Lord is sowing that seed in me, that shall spring up in fruits "of righteousness, to his praise, and my certain profit; and "the day will come, wherein I shall bless his name from my "heart, for all the sorrows I now feel and mourn under?"

I shall say no more of this head of affliction; but only would give you this warning. Afflictions are very common, and much complained of. Some professors spend all the little religion they have upon their afflictions. Take heed to your hearts under afflictions. It is to be bewailed, that many

Christians, their afflictions come on them they know not whence, they lie on them they know not wherefore, and they go off they know not how; that, if I may allude to such sacred words, and apply the phrase to such a sinful frame, afflictions come on many, and they feel the smart of them, but *know not whence they come, nor whither they go.* They come on them when they are sent, and go off when they are called; but they neither knew what God meant by them, nor did by them. No Christian can ever make a spiritual and hearty song of praise for afflictions, unless there be some sense or hope of profit thereby. If the profit be seen, the wisdom and love of God in afflicting, will be heartily acknowledged.

V. The fifth time of special need of the grace of God, is, *a time of special duty and service to God called for.* All the course of our life is to be constant service. We ought to live to his praise. We are made as creatures, and as new creatures, for this end, Isa. xliii. 21. 1 Pet. ii. 9. But there are some seasons in which special work is called for, and then there is great need of grace to help in that hour. It is a mighty word of the preacher, Eccl. viii. 6. *Because to every purpose there is time, and judgment; therefore the misery of man is great upon him.* And it is only *the wise man's heart that discerneth time and judgment*, ver. 5. I would name four of those times.

1. The time that men are called to believe on Jesus Christ, and to secure their eternal salvation by a full closing with him. This is a *now*, a *day*, an *accepted time*, a *day of salvation*, 2 Cor. vi. 2. All that hear the gospel, are bound by the call of God in it, and warranted by the promise of it, to receive by faith Jesus Christ, and eternal life, every time they hear the gospel. But sometimes this duty is specially called for; which, if neglected, may be of fatal consequence to men. Hence that exhortation, Isa. lv. 6. *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.* When Christ is knocking at the door of the heart, then it is special duty to open to him, Rev. iii. 20. This was the day Jerusalem had, and neglected; and that that Christ mourned over them for, Luke xix. 41, 42. Unspeakable is mens need of the prevail-

ing help of grace, when their hearts and consciences are warmed with the calls of grace in the gospel. In such seasons, the everlasting bargain is either fixed by the power of grace working faith in the heart; or people are left to themselves, and are farther from heaven than ever.

2. Some special call to men to give their testimony to Christ and his gospel by suffering. The Lord comes and craves mens testimony to his truth, and chargeth them thus: "If "thou hast any love to me and my honour, I demand thy "witness, venture thy all, take up thy cross." Many Christians have neglected such trying seasons, which in vain and sorrowfully they have wished for again. There is much of God's grace needful to discern these seasons, and wisely to improve them.

3. There is another remarkable season of mens need of God's grace to help them in; and that is, the season of the Lord's calling them to a duty-trial; a duty called to by way of trial. The Lord gives the call to try men; and very great are the consequences of obeying or disobeying of such a call. Many instances are of this in the word. One is in Numb. xiv. The passage is plain and awful. When Israel had been above a year in the wilderness, twelve spies are sent to view the land: they all bring back an evil report, save Joshua and Caleb: the people murmur; God threatens them with judgments: they seem to be sensible of their sin; it is like by the plague that slew the ten false spies, ver. 37. and by what Moses spake to them. They acknowledge their sin; and resolve to go up next morning, ver. 40. Moses tells them, they *now sinned again, and that the Lord was not among them*, ver. 41, 42. What severe dealing is this? The Lord was among them yesterday, not this morning: they were bid go up yesterday, they are forbid next morning. Because they did not what the Lord bid them do in his time, he will not protect them when they do the same thing in their time. Thus Saul was tried twice, 1 Sam. xiii. Samuel bid him tarry for him seven days at Gilgal: Saul tarried six days, and part of the seventh, and then offered sacrifice; not, as I think, that he did invade the priest's office himself, but commanded some priest to do it. Profane princes never want profane chaplains. What a

severe sentence doth Samuel pronounce against him, ver. 13, 14.? Again, the same man is tried with another duty, 1 Sam. xv. and fails therein, and is punished therefore. This sort of trying men by duty, is like that in 2 Kings xiii. 14,—20. which Elisha did put Joash unto. How many of the people of God, through the want of the present help of grace in some duty-trials, have stepped into such paths, and have fallen into such pits and snares, as they have never got well and clearly out of, as long as they lived?

4 It is a season of great need of grace to help us in, when the Lord, by his providence, puts several things in a person's choice, and leaves them to chuse. The fullest of this kind was that offer made to David about judgments, 2 Sam. xxiv. 12, 13. A hard choice; but David did chuse wisely. His son Solomon had another offer; but it was of blessings, and not of judgments, 2 Chron. i. 7. *Ask what I shall give thee.* And he chose wisely: and by his choice proved, that he had already received a good measure of wisdom. Moses had a great offer, and things of vast difference were in his choice; and he chose like a man taught of God, Heb. xi. 24, 25, 26. Moses, in his last sermon to Israel, Deut. xxx. 15,—19, 20. puts them on chusing: *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore chuse life, that both thou and thy seed may live: that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him; for he is thy life, and the length of thy days.* So did his successor Joshua, when he had settled Israel in the promised land, a little before his death: Joshua xxiv. 15. *Chuse you this day whom you will serve.* Elijah did so with apostate Israel, 1 Kings xviii. 21. Somewhat like this is laid before men in the daily ministry of the word. The curse of the law, or the blessing of the gospel, is in mens offer; and men get as they chuse. If men refuse the blessing, the curse belongs to them; if they receive the blessing, they are delivered from the curse. But the *chusing* I mean, is that the Lord puts men often to, in the several turns of his providence towards them: Psalm xxv. 12. *What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall he teach in the way that he shall chuse.* Many gracious promises are in

the word, of God's guiding of his people; many prayers put up by saints in the word for this gracious guiding; and many praises rendered to the Lord for their blessed experience of his guiding. Who can walk safely through this wilderness, without *the pillar of cloud by day*, and *the pillar of fire by night?* How many of mens sorrows may be laid on their being left of God, in chusing for themselves? and how many of our mercies are owing to the Lord's gracious guiding of us in doubtful cases? But it is a very hard thing to ask direction from God. Three faults are common in this practice. 1. Pre-engagement of heart. As it is a great sin after vows to make inquiry, Prov. xx. 25.; so is it to ask direction from God, when men are resolved on the way they will take. An eminent instance of this sinful frame, we have in Jer. xlii. and xliii. They sought counsel of God by the prophet in a great strait; they promised to follow it whatever it was; God gives his mind; they reject it, because it suited not their inclinations. It is no easy thing to ask direction of God, with an undetermined frame. 2. Pride of understanding. Men think they are wise enough to chuse their own way. Therefore that command should be much minded, Prov. iii. 5, 6, 7. *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart: and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes.* And that other word, Prov. xx. 24. *Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?* Prov. xvi. 9. *A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.* 3. Haste. Men *wait not for God's counsel*, Psalm cvi. 13.; and therefore go without it, and stumble in dark paths. *He that believeth, maketh not haste*, Isa. xxviii. 16. A little more *patient waiting on the Lord*, as Psalm xl. 1. hath often brought in determining light in doubtful cases.

So much for the fifth season of need of grace.

VI. The last time of need of grace is, *the time of dying*. It is indeed the last; for he that is helped by grace in that time, will need no more help of grace to eternity. This time of dying, is what we should all think on; and if you think aright on it, it will not be unwelcome to hear of it.

On this I would shew, 1. The need of grace. And, 2. The help of grace in this last and greatest time of need.

1. I would speak of *the need of grace to help in this season.* Though all men have some conviction of it; yet, to strengthen that conviction, I would speak to a few things about it.

1st, This time of need is unavoidable. It is a time that must come. Other times of need may come, and may not come. We may be tempted, we may be afflicted, we may be tried, we may be cast down, and we may be lifted up again: but die we must. *It is appointed unto men once to die,* Heb. ix. 27. As sure as we live, we must die. We live our appointed time, and we die at our appointed time, Job xiv. 5, 14. and all our *times are in his hand,* Psalm xxxi. 15. Eccl. iii. 2. *There is a time to be born, and a time to die,* ver. 11. *He hath made every thing beautiful in his time.* That man must have better eyes than those of flesh, that can see any beauty in death. If there had been but two or three of mankind, that had lived from Noah to this day, and had been privileged with an exemption from this general appointment, every fool on earth would have dreamed, that, it may be, he shall partake of the same privilege also. But when all that ever breathed from Adam to this day, are dead, (save the present generation, whom a few more years will sweep away, as it hath done their predecessors); what folly is there in mens thoughtlessness of this unavoidable fate? But if you say, *All shall not die, but be changed,* as 1 Cor. xv. 51. 1 Thess. iv. 17.; consider, that this change is to them, as death is to us; and it may be will be as terrible to the saints alive then, as death now is. As believers now dread not death, and to be dead, so much as they fear to die; the state of the dead in Christ is not terrible, but the passage to it is: so they that are changed at Christ's coming, may have the same sentiments, till the change be wrought on them. It is (though none knows the particular manner of it) a putting off of mortality and corruption, and a putting on the robes of immortality and incorruption. The same is done as to every saint at death and the resurrection. Both are done to every believer in an instant, who are found alive at Christ's second coming. Elijah's translation, 2 Kings ii. and Enoch's, Heb. xi. 5. were emblems of the change on

believers at Christ's second appearance; as the raising of Lazarus, and others, both in the Old Testament and New, were of the general resurrection: and in special manner they spoke of, Matth. xxvii. 52, 53. *And the graves were opened; and many bodies of saints which slept, arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.* But whatever the change on saints at Christ's coming be to them, and if it may be thought a more easy trial than natural death is; it is certain, that the change that shall then pass on the ungodly, will be far more dreadful than bare dying is now. This is then the only exception from the general appointment on *all men once to die.* How amazing then is the stupidity of men, that so few seriously think on it, and prepare for it? that so many men and women, that are under the sentence of death; that have the seeds of death in them; that live in a world wherein all things that have life, are dying before their eyes: that live on creatures that lose their lives to support theirs; that have so many warnings of death's sure and speedy approach, are yet, after all, surprised by it when it comes, as if they had never heard of it? This stupidity is both a sad sign and effect of the plague of unbelief. Judgment and eternity, that follow at death's heels, are matters of pure faith. But death is obvious to sense, reason, and universal experience. Yet men only think they may die, and do not entertain the persuasion with assurance into their hearts, and serious daily thoughts, that they must die.

2dly, Dying is not only unavoidable, but it is a new trial. None can tell what dying is. Many know what it is to be sick, to be in great pain, to faint and fall into a swoon, which is a little image of death; as also the Heathen poet called sleep *death's elder brother:* but none knows what dying is. It was a very sensible word a dying Christian in this city spoke to myself, when visiting him a few hours before his death, "No man can tell another what dying is. I feel I am "dying; but I cannot tell you what it is." Death is a path that you never trode before; you never walked in it hitherto; you may have thought yourselves to have gone a good way in *the valley of the shadow of death*, but you never walked through

it. Paul *died daily*, 1 Cor. xv. 31.; he was *in deaths often*, 2 Cor. xi. 23.: yet he was a living man then, when he said so; and he died but once. All new trials require new supplies of grace; and the trial of death is quite new. When we are tempted one day, we may know what temptation is thereby, and be thereby fitted for the next: but no past experience can teach us fully what dying is.

3dly, Dying is not only a necessary, and new trial; but it is such a trial, in which a man's all is concerned for eternity. Immediately on death follows *judgment*, Heb. ix. 27. Death is the dark trance betwixt time and eternity. While we live, we are in time; when we are a-dying, we are leaving time, and passing into eternity; when we are dead, we are quite and for ever out of time, and are in eternity for ever. If a man miscarry in this passage, if a man stumble in the dark valley of death, if he fall here, he falls for ever. I would not have people to imagine, that the stress of their salvation depends on their frame when a-dying; for some Christians, when near to death, have neither the use and exercise of sense or reason, much less of grace. But surely, when the case of mens bodies permits acts of a man, or of a Christian, there is great need of grace to enable us to die well.

4thly, Dying is a great trial of faith. Though we know not fully what dying is; yet we may know so much of it, as to be convinced, that it is much harder to *die in faith* than to *live by faith:* and yet *living by faith* is the hardest thing we have to do in this world. To trust in an unseen God; to believe his unchangeable love, when we feel his anger, to trust his bare word, when we see no appearance of performance, but many to the contrary, are no easy things to the best. Our frequent experience of the difficulty, and of our many failings in this daily exercise, of *living by faith*, may justly make us sensible of our need of great help of grace, when we shall be called to the new and more hard work of *dying by faith*. To inforce this a little, consider,

(1.) Usually when death draws near to men, and they draw near to it, the eye of the mind is clearer, and the conscience more tender and sharp-sighted, in the review of their

life and actions. Many never saw their lives well, till they are just at the end of them. And many believers walk so, as a spiritual review of their ways breeds no small storm in their consciences, and trial and shaking to their faith. Though death be a dark valley, yet great light of convictions and challenges springs up in it. Woe to them that never know, till they are a-dying, what an awakened conscience is. Ways that are pleasing to men, when the evil day is put far away, look frightfully on them when that day approacheth, and is very nigh.

(2.) A dying time, is a time wherein the devil is very busy. He fetcheth then his last stroke on saints, and on sinners. He doth his utmost to secure the damnation of sinners, that he may not lose them at last. The devil's death-hold of a dying sinner is a strong one. He also doth his utmost against believers, if not to mar their salvation, yet to hinder their consolation. The devil's parting-blow hath been dreadful to many a saint. It is a weighty word, Heb. ii. 14. where he is said to *have the power of death*. It is true, there it is said also, that *Christ overcame him*, and *through death*. Death is properly and strictly in the devil's dominions. Sin and death are properly the devil's, though the Lord hath the wise ordering of both. He permits sin, and inflicts death; and death lies near the devil's great prison, hell. Through the valley of death there are two passages; one leading to hell, and another to heaven. Most fall into the pit; others are brought through safe and sound, by the skill and mercy of their blessed guide, Christ. It fares here with believers as with Israel, and with unbelievers as with the Egyptians, Heb. xi. 29. *By faith they passed through the Red-sea, as by dry land; which the Egyptians assaying to do, were drowned.*

(3.) Judgment and eternity, when near, and seen at hand, are awful things: and a near view of them will try faith greatly. This view blows away the presumption and hope of the hypocrite; Job xxvii. 8. *What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?* Job xi. 20. *Their hope is as the giving up of the ghost.* His hope lived as long as he lived; and when he dies, it dies also. Woe to them that have a dying hope, a hope that cannot outlive death.

Christians are *begotten to a living* or *lively hope*, 1 Pet. i. 3. He *hath hope in his death*, Prov. xiv. 32. The man's body dies, but the Christian's hope and faith lives. He *lies down in the grave in hope*, Psal. xvi. 9. He *dies in that faith* he lived by, Heb. xi. 13.

2. *What is the helpfulness of grace, in this time of great need, a time of dying.* I am speaking to living men, but to such as must die, and know not how soon. I shall only insist on one thing at this time. The grace of God helps believers, by strengthening of their faith. That is the help they mainly need in that hour. And this help stands in these:—

1*st*, When a dying believer is helped by grace to see death in Christ's hand. There is a vast difference betwixt death in the devil's hand, who hath the power of it; and death in Christ's hand, who is master both of death and the devil: betwixt a man's seeing death approaching, and the devil behind it, and with it; and a man's seeing death coming on him, and Christ with it. Paul's triumph rose on this ground: 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57. *O death, where is thy sting? O grave,* (or *hell*), *where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* That by which death stings men, is sin unpardoned, and God's holy law binding sin and wrath on their persons. Victory over both sin and the law, comes by Jesus Christ. When this victor, and victory in Christ, is seen by a believer, death is defied and despised, as a stingless overcome thing. Much and strong faith is needful to enable a man to *play on the hole of this asp.* Christ reveals himself to John almost dead with fear, Rev. i. 17, 18. *Fear not; I have the keys of hell and of death.* "Behold them in my hand, and behold me as the "lord of them." Should a believer in Jesus fear any thing that Christ hath the power of? The bitterness of death is past to all believers, by Christ's death, and victory over it. And if their faith was strong, their fears would be small.

2*dly*, To have faith enabled to look through death, and beyond death. If a man's eyes be fixed on death only, and

see no further, it is death to look on death: but when the believer's eye of faith is so quickened, that he can look through the trance of death, and see within the vail, where Christ is, that is a blessed help of grace. Christians faith and *hope enters within the vail*, Heb. vi. 19. And a view within the vail is specially desirable and useful, when the Christian is *walking in the valley of the shadow of death*, Psal. xxiii. 4.

3*dly*, Faith is helped, when the dying believer is enabled to cast his anchor on God in Christ confidently in this last storm. This last act of faith is a great one. The more sensible a man is that he is on the point of eternal ruin, the nearer he is to drop into hell without divine help; the more sensibly he acts faith. Then the clingings and graspings of faith on Christ, are sensible and strong. When a believer looks on himself, and on his way, and seeth nothing in them pleasing or staying to his soul; he looks into the dark passage before him, and it is frightful to heart and flesh; he looks on judgment and eternity as just at hand, and his thoughts are swallowed up with their greatness. In this case to stay his soul, and say with dying David, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. *Although my house be not so with God*, (Though my heart, my ways, be not so with God as they ought to have been); *yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: and this is all my salvation and all my desire*, requires singular help of the grace of God. To shut the eyes, and give the hand to Christ, and to quiet the mind, by trusting our guide in this last step, is a mighty blessing.

I would conclude this discourse with these four:—

1. It is a great mystery of faith, and a great trial of faith, that the way to eternal life should lie through the midst of this dark valley of death. Our Lord Jesus Christ bought eternal life for us, by the price of his blood; he went through death to take possession of his kingdom and glory: and yet his people must go through death to take possession of the gift of eternal life. If there were any allowed room or place for prayer in this affair, how many, and how earnest prayers would we make to be delivered from going in this way to glory? But after a life of trials, temptations, and manifold tribulations, this last is still before us; and we must pass through;

and set our feet in the cold waters of this Jordan, ere we enter the heavenly Canaan. After all the lively hopes of heaven, and sweet foretastes of it, we have had; after our faith hath risen us to a full assurance; yet through death must all the heirs of glory pass.

2. There is no wisdom like that of preparing for this awful hour; Job xiv. 14. *If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.* "I "will think on it, I will look for it, I will prepare for it." Men are wise or foolish, according to their faithful diligence, or unbelieving negligence, in this preparing for death. Many have bewailed their neglect; never did any repent their diligence, in this work.

3. There is no right and sure way of preparing for death, but by seeking saving acquaintance with Jesus. If you set about the study of holiness without Christ, you mistake your way, and will never reach your end. But labour to be intimately acquainted with Jesus Christ, and the communications of his grace will make you holy. Death deals with men, and billets them into their eternal quarters, in heaven or hell, as men are in Christ, or out of Christ. Their works, according to which they are judged, are but the fruits and effects of their different states. These two different states of men in this life, in Christ, or not in Christ, are the foundation of the two different states in the next life, in heaven, or in hell; though all in Christ are holy, and all out of Christ are unholy.

4. There is no life truly comfortable, but that which hath a comfortable prospect of death and judgment. Never envy the condition of them who seem to be the only cheerful men in the world, whom one quarter of an hour's serious thought of death and judgment, is enough to make them like Belshazzar at his great feast, Dan v. 6. whose *countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.* Amazement seized on soul and body. How can a man be said to live comfortably, that dare not think of death, for fear of marring his comfort? Miserable is that consolation, that cannot bear a serious thought of an approaching unavoidable thing.

at death. Men are ashamed to express any quarrel against dying; but there are many things about it that makes us needy of much grace to help to quiet submitting unto it, both in substance, and all circumstances attending it.

2. Safe dying. This is very needful, and it is grace's doing. Many die patiently, as men think, that die not safely. *There are no bands in the death of the wicked* sometimes, Psal. lxxiii. 4. Some go out of this life to hell more calmly, than some of the heirs of glory pass to their blessed home. Safe dying, is to die without any hurt to the soul; that when the cage of the body is broken by death, the soul, the bird, may take wing, and fly straight and safe to heaven. *Death is the believers*, 1 Cor. iii. 22. as well as *life*. But what have we to do with death, or death with us? It is a black boat, that we must sail out of time to heaven in: and Christ steers the boat, and lands all believers safely on heaven's shore. This is all we have to do with death. And when all the passengers are brought over, Christ will burn this ugly boat: Rev. xx. 14, 15. *And death and hell* (or *the grave*) *were cast into the lake of fire: this is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire.* And then in the new Jerusalem, *there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away*, Rev. xxi. 4. Who would not venture to pass out of this bad world, to that blessed land, under Christ's conduct, though sailing through the gulph of death be unpleasant in itself to us? Men for gain will sail from one end of the earth to the other; through heat and cold, and stormy seas and winds, and manifold perils, in the probable hope of advantage. But believers may be assured, that they shall arrive at their port. Never did a believer in Jesus Christ die or drown in his voyage to heaven. They will be all found safe and sound with the Lamb on Mount Zion. Christ loseth *none* of them; yea, *nothing* of them, John vi. 39. Not a bone of a believer is to be seen in the field of battle. They are all *more than conquerors, through him that loved them*, Rom. viii. 37.

3. It is very desirable to have an honourable dying. It is a part of the vanity of this world, that many dote upon an

honourable burial. Some respect indeed should be paid to the dead bodies of believers; but honourable dying is a great deal more considerable, than that men call an honourable burial. Our Lord told Peter of his dying, John xxi. 19. *This spake Jesus, signifying by what death Peter should glorify God.* That is honourable dying that brings glory to God. Paul is confident of this as to himself: Phil. i. 20. *According to my earnest expectation, and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.* The most honourable dying, is dying for the Lord. This honour is not given to all his saints. All saints *die in the Lord, and blessed are they,* Rev. xiv. 13. Our desires should be, to be enabled by his grace to bear our dying testimony to Christ and his gospel. There have been strong convictions given to the consciences of sinners, wonderful supports to the hearts of surviving saints, by the honourable dying of some believers. Their example, their words, their very looks and behaviour, in the shadow of death, have been of great use to them that have seen and heard them.

4. It is also desirable to have the mercy of comfortable dying; to have *an entrance ministered to us abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,* 2 Pet. i. 11. The Lord's dealings with his people in this matter, are a great depth. Some that have given most shining evidences of the truth and strength of the grace of God in them, who have spent their days eminently to the Lord's praise, and to the edifying of his body the church, have gone to heaven under a cloud: others, that were hardly known or regarded in Christ's flock, have gone off the stage triumphantly. No observer can escape the notice of such instances. Therefore we must not say, that consolation in dying is a certain sign of eminency in grace, or of tenderness in walking. It is not very unusual, to see the greatest storm overtake even a strong believer, just as he is putting into the harbour. However, this dispensation of the Lord's grace in granting a comfortable exit, is what we should beg earnestly, and pray for heartily. I believe that there are few Christians so cast down with fears, and clouds, and darkness, but if they could be as-

sured, that all shall be dispelled at death, (and it is sometimes so); and that they should have a clear evening, and strong consolation, in their last hours, they would bear their present sorrows better. Though comfortable dying be not simply necessary to the salvation of a believer; yet it is a blessing more valuable than many others that are more in our prayers. Grace can help to it; and a precious help it is, and we should mind it much in our addresses to the throne of grace.

So much of these times of need, and of the help of grace in them.

There are a few exhortations from this whole doctrine of the helpfulness of grace in a time of need, that I would conclude this text with.

The general exhortation is this, Learn not only to submit as to what is determined, and that you cannot alter; but to be heartily content with this wise dispensation of God about your need and his grace, as a contrivance becoming his wisdom, and levelled at your good: As,

1. That our necessities are so many, so great, and so unavoidable; and yet there is a sufficient supply provided for them. The new creature is the most needy creature of all God's creation. The Lord hath framed the new creature in a singular way, and for a singular use and end. All other creatures have their being from God, and have that being continued by God in the common course of his wise and powerful providence. But the new creature is not only of and from God, but it is wrought, and hath its being in Christ Jesus, and its life is continued by a continual gracious efflux from him; for *without him* the new creature *can do nothing*, John xv. 5. Let not such a thought arise in your heart, (or if it arise, give it no entertainment), Why hath God made this new creature so needy a creature as it is? Surely he might have done otherwise. He made the first Adam in another state. He was made perfect in soul and body immediately. His state was perfect; he needed little, and all at hand. But the new creature is framed weak and necessitous. The difference is as great betwixt the first Adam, and a Christian at his regeneration, as betwixt perfect Adam, and a young babe

newly born, or a child conceived in the womb. Yet the Lord hath made provision of grace sufficient for all these necessities. And he loves the glory of his grace so, and takes so great delight in giving of his grace, that he not only lets the heirs of this grace fall into the common pit of sin and misery with others, and sometimes deeper than many of them that are left, that his grace may be glorified, in *loving them out of the pit of corruption*, as Hezekiah's word is, Isa. xxxviii. 17.; (for all that are converted, are plucked out of their natural damnable state, by a mighty act of the love of God, Eph. ii. 4.); but when he hath pulled them out, he sets them down in his kingdom of grace, in so indigent and weak a condition, that they may glorify him by begging and believing, and he may glorify himself in giving of his grace to them. Who should find fault with this wise way?

2. Be satisfied, that this grace which is your supply, is all in Christ Jesus, and not in your own hand. Since Adam fell, and ruined himself and all his posterity, by having his and their stock in his own hand, and sinning it away; the Lord in mercy hath resolved never to intrust a mere man again with his own stock; but hath lodged all the grace his people are saved and supplied by, in Christ's hand. And there it is safe. Adam was created perfect, and had a sufficient stock to have enriched himself, and all his offspring; but he was left to his free will, and so came on it. This is an eternal disgrace to man's free will. What must the free will of a sinner be able to do, when the free will of perfect sinless man opened the door to sin, and death, and ruin, upon the whole world of mankind? It is therefore graciously and wisely provided, that free will shall have no hand in the salvation of sinners, (and indeed free will to good, is but a vain name, usurped by willing and wilful slaves of sin); and that in its stead, the free grace of God in Jesus Christ shall be, and do all in all. But we are so proud, that we would fain have somewhat in our own hand; and are so used to sense, and unskilful in believing, that we can hardly reckon that our own, that is not in our possession, and at our disposing. But, in this order, the Lord consults the interest of his glory, and the security of our salvation, and daily supplies, by lodging our all in Christ's

hand; who is able to keep it safely for us, and ready and willing to give forth of it to us, according to our real necessity.

3. Be satisfied with this, that the special times of our need are not usually known to us before they come. There is none of the people of God, nor of the children of men, that usually know twenty-four hours before, what temptations and trials they may meet with. We know we may be tempted; but we know not when, nor how, and in what part, the adversary may assault us, or with what weapons. We know we may be afflicted: but we know not with what rod, nor when. We know we must die; but we know not how, nor when. There is a foolish and sinful curiosity in our nature, that raiseth desires to know future things concerning ourselves. It were well, if men were duly desirous to know from the word, what their eternal state shall be. But in other things that may befal us in time, it is dangerous curiosity to be inquisitive. People imagine, that it would be of great advantage to them to foreknow future events, as to themselves. But I am sure it would be a great disadvantage, and what you would quickly repent of. If the Lord should reveal to any of you, and set in a clear light before the eyes of your mind, all the particular providences, trials, and afflictions, and temptations, you are to meet with in seven years time to come; what a dread would it be you! You would soon beg that it might be forgot again. It is a great deal better for us, that future things that belong to God, are secret and kept from us; and that we are led on believing, and come to the waters in our way to heaven, one after another, and get through them, by the gracious conduct of our blessed guide, Christ. He will give no Christian a particular and exact map of all his way, and stages, and entertainment, in this wilderness-journey to heaven, though our Lord hath fixed them all in his decree. Should it not be enough for us, that he will lead us well and safely; that no water shall drown us; that he will never leave us, but be with us wherever he leads us, and will bring us safe home at last to his Father's house?

4. Be satisfied with this part of his wise order, that this supply of his grace to help in time of need, must be come for. Not only that we may come for it, which is a great privilege;

but that we must come for it, if we would have it. Is there any so unreasonable, as to find fault with this order? Is it not fair and easy, Ask and have? Would any have grace to help them, unsought? If you would have it, you are asking it. Is it not fit then to come for it, and tell Christ you would have it? If you would not have it, you are praying against it. And wicked are those prayers, that are in aversion from the grace of Christ? Every believer will find his heart reconciled to this order. They know, that there is a blessing in coming, as well as a blessing to be got by coming. And most Christians, I am apt to think, continue their approaches to the throne of grace, as much, if not more, from the delight they find in coming, as from the profit they find by coming; though these two are not inconsistent. *He that delights not himself in the Lord, will not always call upon God,* Job xxvii. 10. So much for this general exhortation.

Exhort. 2. In the next place, I would speak somewhat to them that are not acquainted with the grace of God, nor with the throne of grace. *Graceless people* is so bad a name, that few will own it, though many deserve it. Such fill up much room in most assemblies, and sometimes may step up into the pulpit, in the name of ministers of that grace of God they never knew but in a book. But God calls all by their right names, and only can make men answer to those names. Let these four things enter into such folks thoughts:—

1. Unavoidably a time of need will come, that the grace of God can only help in. None but a great atheist can make any doubt of this. Dost thou believe there is a God? that thou art a mortal man, whom a few days more will turn out of this world? Dost thou believe that thou hast an immortal soul, that must be for ever? (and how much a beast is that man, and worse than a beast, that doubts of any of these?) If thou believe these plain principles, canst thou doubt but a time of need will come, wherein nothing can stand thee in any stead, but only this God's mercy and grace?

2. This present time you have, is the only time given you for preparing for the time of need that must come. How little is that precious golden talent, time, laid out for that the Lord gives it for? Can men think that God gives them time,

to spend it in the ways they spend it? That must be ill-spent time, that is spent so, as men know they must either repent of, or perish by. We are bid *redeem the time*, Eph. v. 16. But most men throw it away, or sell it to sin and Satan, as if they had no use for it. The best use of time, is to spend it in preparing for eternity: *All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come*, Job xiv. 14. These are well-spent days. But how few of the hours of your days are thus spent?

3. There can be no greater folly, than to neglect this present only season of preparing for an unavoidable time of extremity. Our Lord, in the parable, calls the five negligent virgins, *foolish*, Matth. xxv. 2. If a man throw away his estate in folly and vanity, the world will brand him with the name of a fool, and justly. If a man throws away his health and life, there is folly in that too. But for a man to throw away his soul, and all his hopes of well-being for eternity, is the rankest of all folly: yet is the world so full of such fools, that very few give it its true name. He must be greatly plagued with blindness and stupidity, that is not convinced, that that is the greatest folly that shuts a man eternally out of heaven, and locks him up in hell.

4. There can be no reflection and remorse more sad and bitter than that that ariseth on the review and sense of this folly, when it is remediless. We read of *the worm that dieth not*, Mark ix. 44, 46, 48. This is commonly understood of conscience. Conscience stings two ways; and one way more dreadfully than the other. Conscience stings for sin, as it is an offence against God, a breach of his holy law, and as it exposeth the sinner to God's dreadful anger. But conscience stings more dreadfully, for neglecting the remedy for sin provided in Christ, and revealed to men in the gospel. Therefore our Lord lays the condemnation of the world that perisheth under the gospel, on this, John iii. 9. It is not laid on the *evil of their deeds:* but on this, that their love to their deeds made them hate the light that discovered them, and the grace that only can pardon and heal them. Men perish not under the gospel, because they are sinners against God's law, (though the least sin deserves hell; and

hey that have not the light of the gospel, are justly judged by the law); but because they *believe not in Jesus Christ*, John iii. 18. And believers in Christ are not saved because hey are holy, (though all that believe are holy); but because hey are in Christ by faith; that the glory of salvation may be Christ's entirely, and the blame of mens perdition under he gospel may be their own entirely.

Let men therefore prevent this dreadful ruin, by giving an ear to him that calleth them. Christ offers you salvation rom a throne of grace: come and take it. Come and put orth your hand, and take and eat of the tree of life, and live or ever. You must all shortly stand before Christ's throne; when it will be no more a throne of grace: 2 Cor. v. 10. *We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.* That will be a time of great need; and none can stand with peace before that throne, but they that have been acquainted with his throne of grace in my text. Christ on the throne of grace, and Christ on the judgment-seat, is the same Christ. Christ in the gospel, and Christ in the clouds, is the same Christ. Yet we must distinguish. Christ on the throne of grace is no judge; and Christ on the judgment-seat hath no grace to dispense. Now is his time of dispensing grace; then will be the day of his punishing the despisers of grace, and of giving the crown of glory to the receivers of his grace.

In the last place, I would give a few directions unto real Christians, in order to your providing of grace to help in time of need.

1. Lay the foundation sure. A time of need will try it, 1 Cor. iii. 11. *Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* The Father hath laid Christ for a foundation: Isa. xxviii. 16. *Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth, shall not make haste.* Applied to Christ, 1 Peter ii. 6. The faithful ministers of the gospel lay Christ for a foundation; 1 Cor. iii. 10. *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder I have laid the foundation.* But how can a poor sinner lay Christ for a foundation to himself? Turn

" fainting, and with so many fears? Is this he whom I loved so " little, and so coldly? Is this he whom (all the time I lived " on earth, after he had revealed himself to me), I depended " and lived on by faith, and that with so many staggerings " through unbelief, because I knew not so well, as now I do, " whom I then believed?

" And until this blessed day come, (and come it will; for " it is promised and sworn by him who cannot lie. It is not " far off; for it is above sixteen hundred years since he tes- " tified, *Surely I come quickly*, Rev. xxii. 20. It is his last pro- " mise to his bride), let his most excellent *name be poured out* " *as ointment;* and let the savour of his knowledge be made " manifest in every place. Let his saving blessed death be " remembered, gloried in, and fed upon, by all believers: " (the greatest token of his love to us, the only price of our re- " demption, 1 Pet. i. 19.) and the only food of our souls.) " Let his justifying righteousness be only mentioned before " God on earth by believing sinners, as it will be only men- " tioned by glorified praising saints in heaven. Let the throne " of grace, reared up by the Father in his Son, and conse- " crated by the blood of his Son, *God manifest in the flesh*, be " revealed to the darkened world, and set up amongst the " blinded nations: and let grace from thence be dispensed to " many thousands of perishing sinners. Let the glory of God's " free, most free, every way free grace in Jesus Christ, shine " so in the nations, as it may (and when that glory shines, it " will) darken, confound, and put to shame, all the Anti- " christian darkness, (and dreams of false Christs of mens " making, and of works, hire, and merit, under all their names " and pretences), and make it all hateful in sinners eyes, as " it is hurtful to their souls, and as it is hateful in God's " sight. Let the praises of *my Lord and my God*, as recovered " Thomas calls him, John xx. 28. fill heaven and earth; and " fill the hearts, and fill the mouths, and shine in the lives of " all believers on his name; and let his praise fill all the gos- " pel-worship in all the churches, till the day of *the glorious* " *appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ*, " Tit. ii. 13. And unto these wishes let every believer on, and " sincere lover of Jesus Christ, say (and every one that is such, " will say) *Amen. So let it be, so will it be.*"

A

SERMON

PREACHED IN OCTOBER 1682.

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QUEST. *By what Means may Ministers best win Souls?*

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1 TIMOTHY iv. 16.

Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine: continue in them: for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

THE words are a substantial part of the good counsel and direction the apostle giveth unto Timothy, and in him unto all the ministers of the gospel.

In them are two things.

1. A threefold duty laid on gospel-ministers, *Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine; continue in them.*

2. A double advantage consequent upon the discharge of this duty: *For in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.*

1. Ministers duty is in three things here.

1*st*, *Take heed unto thyself.* Thou art set in a high office, in a dangerous place; take good and narrow heed, look well to thyself, thy heart and way.

2*dly*, *Take heed unto thy doctrine.* Though thou be ever so well gifted, and approved both of God and men; though thou be an extraordinary officer, (as Timothy was); yet take heed unto thy doctrine. These two we pass at present; because we shall resume them at greater length, when we take their help to the resolving of this question.

3*dly*, *Continue in them.* This hath relation, it appears, unto

ver. 12, and 15. as well as unto the preceding part of this verse. I shall dismiss this part of the verse with these:

(1.) Continue in thy work. Thou who art a minister, it is a work for thy lifetime; and not to be taken up and laid down again, according as it may best suit a man's carnal inclinations, and outward conveniences. The apostles that laboured with their hands, have, by that example, set the conscience of a minister at liberty, to provide for the necessities of this life by other employments, when he cannot live of the gsopel; yet certainly no man that is called of God to this work, can with a safe conscience abandon it wholly. Paul, for example rather, than necessity, both preached, and wrought in a handy-craft. As preaching doth not make working unlawful, so neither should any other business of a minister make preaching to cease.

(2.) Continue in endeavours after greater fitness for thy work. No attainments in fitness and qualifications for this work, can free a man of the obligation that lies on him to encrease and grow therein more and more. It is not enough that a man study and be painful ere he enter into the ministry, but he must labour still to be more fit for his great work.

(3.) Continue in thy vigour, and painfulness, and diligence. Young ministers, that are sound and sincere before God, are usually warm and diligent in the first years of their ministry; and many do decline afterwards, and become more cold and remiss. This exhortation is a check thereunto: *Continue in them.*

2. The second thing in the word, is, the double advantage proposed to encourage ministers to this hard duty.

1*st*, *Thou shalt save thyself.* Thy own salvation shall be promoted and secured thereby.

How becoming is it for a minister to mind his own salvation! and to mind it so heartily, as to be animated from the hopes of it unto the greater diligence in his ministry!

But how doth faithfulness in the ministry of the gospel further the minister's salvation?

(1.) Faithfulness in a man's generation-work, is of great use and advantage to salvation. *Well done good and faithful servant*, from the Lord's own mouth, is a great security; and

diligence and faithfulness in improving the talents we are intrusted with, through grace, procure that testimony.

(2.) Thou shalt save thyself from the guilt of other mens sins and ruin, if thou be faithful in the ministry: Ezek. xxxiii. 9. *Thou hast delivered* (or *saved*) *thy soul*, saith the Lord to the prophet in the case of unsuccessful faithfulness. So Paul, Acts xviii. 6. *I am clean, your blood be upon your own heads:* and Acts xx. 26, 27. *I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men: for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.* Every minister pledgeth his soul to God, that he shall be a faithful servant; and he that is such, may freely take up his stake, whatever his success on others be.

(3.) Faithfulness and painfulness in the ministry of the gospel, promotes a man's own salvation, in so far as the work of Christianity is woven in with the right discharge of the office of the ministry. Many ministers can say, that if they had not been ministers, they had in all appearance lost their souls. The subject of the minister's work, is the same with that of a Christian's; and above all men should he be careful of his heart and intentions, that all be pure and spiritual. No man in any work he is called to, is under so strict a necessity of dependence on the influence and assistance of the Holy Ghost, both for gifts and grace. And are not all these great helps unto our own salvation?

2dly, The second advantage is, *Thou shalt save them that hear thee.* There is little hope of that man's being useful to save others, that minds not his own salvation; and therefore the apostle puts them in this order, *thyself*, and then, *them that hear thee.*

This description of the people, *them that hear thee*, saith, That the principal work of a minister is preaching; and the principal benefit people have by them, is to hear the Lord's word from them; though there be a *seeing* (*i. e.* of their holy conversation) that is also useful, Phil. iv. 9. But the apostle knew no such ministers as were only to be seen in worldly pomp and grandeur, and seldom or never heard preaching.

Thou shalt save them. The great end of both preaching and hearing, is salvation; and if salvation were more designed by

preachers and hearers, it would be more frequently the effect of the action.

Thou shalt save them. Thou shalt, by the Lord's blessing on thy ministry, be successful in converting sinners, and in building up of saints in holiness and faith unto salvation. Not that ministers are of themselves able by all their endeavours to carry on this great end; they are only God's tools and instruments, 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7. Concerning this,

(1.) We find, that the Lord hath appointed this great ordinance of the gospel-ministry for this end, the saving of men, Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13. It is *through their word that men believe*, John xvii. 20. And divine appointment of the means, declares both it to be useful, and the end to be hopeful.

(2.) He hath also given many promises of his presence, blessing, and success, to follow and attend them whom he sends on this great errand. Christ's first calling of the apostles had this promise in it, *I will make you fishers of men*: which not only declared what that employment was he called them unto, but it assured them of success in it. At his leaving of them, Matth. xxviii. 20. he promised *to be with them unto the end of the world.* And this promise is as good to us as it was to them.

(3.) He hath also revealed much of his mind about ministers duty, in order to this end of saving men. This also makes the end more hopeful.

(4.) We find, that the Lord doth qualify and fit those whom he makes successful. He makes men *able ministers of the New Testament*, the word of life, 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6. And still, according to the success the Lord hath a mind to bless a man with, gifts and qualifications, and assistance, are proportionably given. The apostles, that had the greatest harvest to reap, were also the strongest labourers: and, though in a far inferior degree, the same method is observed by the Lord in dealing with and by ordinary ministers. It is true, that always the most able and learned ministers are not most successful; yet, generally, the most skilful labourers are most blessed. Neither are the most learned and able men for parts most fit and skilful in dealing with souls at all times.

Now, having opened the words, we shall return to the question to be resolved,

By what Means may Ministers best win Souls?

In speaking to which, I shall,

I. Shew what this text saith unto this purpose. And then,

II. Give some further account thereof from other scriptures. And,

III. Apply it both to ministers and people.

I. *What this text speaks about this matter.* It looks two ways upon this question. 1. It gives a direct answer unto it: and points forth duty. 2. It gives an encouraging promise of the good effect and fruit of the discharge of the duty. I shall carry on both together.

1. *Take heed unto thyself.* Wouldst thou be a saved and successful minister? *Take heed unto thyself.* Such warnings imply always a case of difficulty and danger wherein he is that gets them.

Take heed unto thyself in these things:

1*st*, Take heed that thou be a sound and sincere believer. The importance of sincere godliness in a minister, is written in the deep wounds that the church of Christ hath received by the hands of ungodly ministers. It hath been made a question, Whether an ungodly man can be a minister? but it is none, that such men are in a most desperate condition: Matth. vii. 22, 23. *Depart from me;* not because you ran unsent, or preached error instead of truth, or preached poorly and meanly, (all great sins in themselves); but because *you work iniquity;* the usual expression of entire ungodliness. What use the Lord may make of the gifts (for great gifts he gives to the worst of men) of ungodly men, even in the ministry of the gospel, is one of his deep paths. But no man can reasonably imagine, that a walker in the way to hell can be a fit and useful guide to them that mind to go to heaven. If a man would have peace in his conscience, and success in his work of the ministry, let him take good heed to this, that he be a sound Christian. There is

a special difficulty for a minister to know his grace. Gifts and grace have deceived many with their likeness; although the difference be great, both in itself, and to an enlightened eye.

2dly, Take heed to thyself, that thou be a called and sent minister. This is of great importance as to success. He that can say, "Lord, thou hast sent me;" may boldly add, "Lord, go with me, and bless me." It is good when a man is serious in this inquiry. It is to be feared that many run, and never asked this question; so is it seen in their speed and success. Jer. xxiii. 32. *I sent them not, therefore they shall not profit this people at all*, is a standing rule to this day.

These things, if found, may serve to satisfy a minister's conscience, that Jesus Christ hath sent him.

(1.) If the heart be filled with a single desire after the great end of the ministry, the glory of God in the salvation of men. Every work that God calls a man to, he makes the end of it amiable. This desire sometimes attends mens first conversion. Paul was called to be a saint and an apostle at once, Acts ix.; and so have many been called to be saints and ministers together. If it be not so, yet this is found with him that Christ calls, that when he is most spiritual and serious, when his heart is most under the impressions of holiness, and he is nearest to God in communion with him; then are such desires after the serving of Jesus Christ in the ministry most powerful. And the sincerity of his desire is also to be examined: and when it is found, it adds greatly to a man's peace: when his heart bears him witness, that it is neither riches, nor honour, nor ease, nor the applause of men, that he seeks after, but singly Christ's honour in the saving of men.

(2.) It helps to clear a man's call, that there hath been a conscientious diligence in all the means of attaining fitness for this great work. That love to the end that doth not direct and determine unto the use of the appointed means, may justly be suspected as irregular, and not flowing from the Holy Ghost. Even extraordinary officers seem not to have been above the use of ordinary means, 2 Tim. iv. 13. old dying Paul sends for his books and papers.

(3) A competent fitness for the work of the ministry, is another proof of a man's call to it. The Lord calls no man to a work for which he doth not qualify. Though a sincere humble man (as all ministers should be) may and should think little of any measure he hath, whether compared with the greater measures of others, or considered with regard unto the weight and worth or the work; yet there must be some confidence as to his competency, for clearing a man's call, 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6. What this competency is, is not easy at all times to determine. Singular necessities of the church may extend or intend this matter of competent fitness. But in general there must be, 1. A competent knowledge of gospel-mysteries. 2. A competent ability of utterance to the edifying of others. This is *aptness to teach*, required of the apostle in 1 Tim. iii. 2.; and Titus i. 9. that a minister be *able, by sound doctrine, to exhort and to convince gainsayers.*

(4.) The savour of a man's ministry on the hearts and consciences of others, both ministers and people, helps much to clear a man's call. So that indeed ordinarily a man can never be so well confirmed in the faith of his being called of God, until he make some essay in this work. Deacons must first be proved, 1 Tim. iii. 10.; much more ministers. A single testimony given by ministers and Christians, that the word dispensed by the man is savoury, and hath effect on the conscience, is a great confirmation; especially if sound conversion of some follow his labours. That is indeed a seal of his ministry, 2 Cor. iii. 3. and 1 Cor. ix. 2.

3*dly*, Take heed unto thyself, that thou be a lively thriving Christian. See that all thy religion run not in the channel of thy employment. It is found by experience, that as it fares with a minister in the frame of his heart, and thriving of the work of God in his soul, so doth it fare with his ministry both in its vigour and effects. A carnal frame, a dead heart, and a loose walk, makes cold and unprofitable preaching. And how common is it for ministers to neglect their own vineyard? When we read the word, we read it as ministers, to know what we should teach, rather than what we should learn as Christians. Unless there be great heed taken, it will be found, that our ministry, and labour therein, may eat out

the life of our Christianity. Not that there is any discord betwixt them; but rather a friendly harmony, when each hath its place and respect. The honest believer meditates, that he may excite his grace; and ministers too often meditate only to increase their gifts. When we preach, the sincere hearer drinks in the word; and it may be we seldom mix faith with it, to grow thereby. O how hard is it to be a minister and a Christian in some of these acts! We are still conversant about the things of God; it is our study all the week long. This is our great advantage. But take heed to thyself, lest ordinary meddling with divine things bring on an ordinary and indifferent impression of them; and then their fruit to thee, and thy benefit by them, is almost gone, and hardly recovered.

4thly, Take heed unto thyself in reference to all the trials and temptations thou mayest meet with. Be on your guard, *watch in all things*, 2 Tim. iv. 5. No men are shot at more by Satan than ministers, and he triumphs not more over the foils of any than theirs. And Christ is liberal in his warnings of dangers, and in his promises of help in them.

2. The second word in the text to this purpose of directing ministers how to be useful to others, is *Take heed unto thy doctrine.* Art thou a minister? Thou must be a preacher. An unpreaching minister is a sort of contradiction. Yea, every sort of preaching is not enough; thou must take heed unto thy doctrine what it is.

Here is a warrant for studying what we are to teach and what we have taught people. But the great matter is to take heed, or study aright. Students commonly need little direction about ordinary study. But concerning the doctrine, I shall entreat to take heed unto it in these things:—

1*st*, Take heed unto thy doctrine, that it be a divine truth: *Let a man speak as the oracles of God*, 1 Pet. iv. 11. And therefore it is needful that ministers be well acquainted with the holy scriptures. A bad token of the temper of that man that relishes any book more than the word of God. The world is full of books written on pretence and design to explain the scriptures; and mens studies are full of them. There is also a blessing in them, and good use to be made of

hem; but also a bad use is made of them. Many ministers ıave found, that they have preached better, and to more proit to the people, when they got their sermon by meditation ın the word, and prayer, than by turning over many authors. ?rom this neglect of the word also come a great many doctrines, that are learned by man, and borrowed from phiosophy; which though they may have some truth in them, ıet since it is divine truth that a minister should bring forth o the people, he should not rest on such low things.

2*dly*, Take heed unto thy doctrine, that it be plain, and ıuited to the capacity of the hearers. Learned preaching (as t is called) is a vanity, pleasing principally to such as neither lesign nor desire edification. True godly learning consists in preaching plainly; and therein is no small difficulty. Two things would help to plain preaching. 1. Clearness of knowledge. The alledged depth of our doctrine often proceeds from our own darkness. 2. Humility and self-denial. We must not seek ourselves, nor the applause of men; but God's glory, and mens salvation. It is found, that the holiest ministers preach most plainly, and the plainest preachers are most successful.

3*dly*, Take heed unto thy doctrine, that it be grave, and solid, and weighty; *sound speech that cannot be condemned*, Tit. ii. 8. Deep and weighty impressions of the things of God upon a man's own heart, would greatly advance this. A minister's spirit is known in the gravity or lightness of his doctrine.

II. But now we come to the second thing proposed, to *give some answer to this question from other things in the word.*

And I shall, 1. Shew some things that must be laid to heart about the end, the saving of souls; and then, 2. Shall give some advice about the means.

1. About the end, the winning of souls. This is to bring them to God. It is not to win them to us, or to engage them into a party, or to the espousal of some opinions and practices, supposing them to be never so right, and consonant to the word of God. But the winning of them is, to

bring them out of nature into a state of grace, that they may be fitted for, and in due time admitted into everlasting glory.

Concerning which great end, these few things should be laid deeply to heart by all that would serve the Lord in being instrumental in reaching it.

1*st*, The exceeding height and excellency of this end is to be laid to heart. It is a wonder of condescendence, that the Lord will make use of men in promoting it. To be workers together with God in so great a business, is no small honour. The great value of mens souls, the greatness of the misery they are delivered from, and of the happiness they are advanced to, with the manifold glory of God shining in all, makes the work of saving men great and excellent. Preaching the gospel, and suffering for it, are services that angels are not employed in. Mean and low thoughts of the great end of the ministry, as they are dissonant from truth, are also great hindrances of due endeavours after the attaining the end.

2*dly*, The great difficulty of saving souls must be laid to heart. The difficulty is undoubted. To attempt it, is to offer violence to mens corrupt natures; and a storming of hell itself, whose captives all sinners are. Unless this difficulty be laid to heart, ministers will be confident of their own strength, and so miscarry, and be unfruitful. Whoever prospers in winning souls, is first convinced that it is the arm of Jehovah only can do the work.

3*dly*, The duty of winning souls must be laid to heart by ministers. That it is their principle work, and they are under many commands to endeavour it. It is a fault to look on fruit only as a reward of endeavours; so it is indeed, and a gracious one: but it should be so minded, as the end we would strive for, Col. i. 28, 29.; which, when attained, is still to his praise: yet most commonly when it is missing, it is to our reproach and danger, when it is (as, alas! it is often) through our default.

4*thly*, The great advantage there is to the labourer by his success, is to be pondered. Great is the gain by one soul. *He that winneth souls, is* happy as well as *wise*, Prov. xi. 30.

Dan. xii. 3. Won souls are a minister's *crown*, and *glory*, and *joy*. Phil. iv. 1. 1 Thess. ii. 20. How far is this account above all others that a man can give of his ministry? These things fixed upon the heart, would enliven us in all endeavours to attain this excellent end.

2. For advice about the means, I shall add these few, besides what hath been said.

1*st*, Let ministers, if they would win souls, procure and retain amongst the people a persuasion of their being sent of God; that they are *Christ's ministers*, 1 Cor. iv. 1. It is not confident asserting of it, nor justifying the lawfulness of our ecclesiastical calling, though there be some use of these things at some times: but it is ability, painfulness, faithfulness, humility, and self-denial, and, in a word, conformity to our Lord Jesus in his ministry, that will constrain people to say, and think, that we are sent of God. Nicodemus comes with this impression of Christ, John iii. 2. *A teacher come from God.* It is certain, that these thoughts in people further the reception of the gospel; Gal. iv. 14. *Ye received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.*

2*dly*, Let ministers, if they would win souls, purchase and maintain the people's love to their persons. And this is best done, by loving of them, and dealing lovingly and patiently with them. There should be no striving with them, especially about worldly things: yea, *meekness to them that oppose themselves*, 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25, 26. It is of great advantage to have their love. How carefully doth Paul sue for it in several epistles; and condescend to intreat and make apologies, when indeed he had not wronged them, but they only did imagine he had wronged them! 2 Cor. xi.

3*dly*, It would further the winning of souls, to deal particularly and personally with them; not always nor altogether in public, Col. i. 28. Acts xx. 20, 21. Great fruit hath constantly followed the conscientious discharge of this duty. The setting of it up in Geneva, did produce incredible fruits of piety, as Calvin reports: when the ministers, and some of the elders, went from house to house, and dealt particularly with the people's consciences. And we are not without many instances of the fruit of this mean in our own time, and in

these nations. Blessed be the Lord for the labourers, and their success.

4thly, Ministers must pray much, if they would be successful. The apostles spent their time this way, Acts vi. 3. Yea, our Lord Jesus preached all day, and continued all night alone in prayer to God. Ministers should be much in prayer. They use to reckon how many hours they spend in reading and study; it were far better both with ourselves and the church of God, if more time were spent in prayer. Luther's spending three hours daily in secret prayer, Bradford's studying on his knees, and other instances of men in our time, are talked of rather than imitated. Ministers should pray much for themselves; for they have corruptions like other men, and have temptations that none but ministers are assaulted with. They should pray for their message. How sweet and easy is it for a minister, (and likely it is to be the more profitable to the people), to bring forth that scripture as food to the souls of his people, that he hath got opened to his own heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the exercise of faith and love in prayer! A minister should pray for a blessing on the word; and he should be much in seeking God particularly for the people. It may be this may be the reason why some ministers of meaner gifts and parts are more successful, than some that are far above them in abilities; not because they preach better, so much as because they pray more. Many good sermons are lost for lack of much prayer in study.

But because the ministry of the word is the main instrument for winning souls, I shall therefore add somewhat more particularly concerning this, and that both as to the matter and manner of preaching.

1. For the subject-matter of gospel-preaching, it is determined by the apostle expressly to be *Christ crucified*, 1 Cor. ii. 2. Two things ministers have to do about him in preaching him to them that are without. 1. To set him forth to people, Gal. iii. 1.; to paint him in his love, excellency, and ability to save. 2. To offer him unto them freely, fully, without any limitation as to sinners, or their sinful state. And then Christ's laws or will to be published to them that receive him, and are his, for the rule of their walk; and his promises,

for the measure and foundation of all their hopes and expectations; and his grace and fulness, for their supply in every case, till they be brought to heaven. This was the simplicity of the gospel that remained but a little while in the Christian church: for ceremonies amongst the Jews, and sinful mixtures of vain philosophy amongst the Gentiles, Col. ii. did by degrees so corrupt the gospel, that the mystery of iniquity ripened in the production of Antichrist. It was a sad observation of the fourth century, that it became a matter of learning and ingenuity to be a Christian. The meaning was, That too much weight was laid on notions, and matters of opinion; and less regard had unto the soundness of the heart, and holiness of the life. In the beginning of the reformation from Popery, the worthies whom God raised up in several countries, did excellently in retrieving the simplicity of the gospel from the Popish mixtures. But that good work took a stand quickly, and is on the declining greatly. How little of Jesus Christ is there in some pulpits! It is seen as to success, that whatever the law doth in alarming sinners, it is still the gospel-voice that is the key that opens the heart to Jesus Christ. Would ministers win souls? Let them have more of Jesus Christ in their dealing with men, and less of other things that never profit them that are exercised therein.

2. As for the manner of successful preaching, I shall give it in a negative and positive, from these two places: 1 Cor. i. 17. and ii. 1,—4.

First, What this negative disowns, is our inquiry. The words are full: *For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.* Again, *I came not to you with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.* Again, *And my speech, and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom.* These are the words of the Holy Ghost concerning a way of preaching that is unprofitable: a way that seems was in use and respect with the Corinthians; and honest Paul was despised by them, for his simple and plain way, different from theirs. I shall only instance in things that this scriptural negative doth check and reprove in the way of preaching.

1. The establishing and advancing of divine truth upon the foundation of human reason; as if there were some weakness and insufficiency in those methods and arguments of working on mens consciences, that the Holy Ghost prescribes. The great foundation of all a minister hath to say, is, *Thus saith the Lord;* and a grave declaring of the testimony of God in this matter, is ministers duty, 1 Cor. ii. 1. and will have more authority on mens consciences, than many human reasons. There is a rational preaching, (as it is called), wherein men do not satisfy themselves to make use of reason as a tool and instrument, (and then its use is excellent), but will establish it as a judge and dictator in all divine matters and truth; and so in effect turn all their preaching into little better things than the lectures of the philosophers of old; save that the poor Pagans were more sincere in their morals, and serious in delivering their opinions.

Let a minister therefore still think with himself, that a plain scripture-testimony is his main argument; and accordingly let him use it. When he teacheth philosophy, and when he teacheth men the will of God about salvation, he is in distinct provinces, and his management of his work therein should be very different.

2. It is to preach with *excellency of speech*, and *words of man's wisdom*, when men think to reach the gospel end on sinners by force of even spiritual reason and persuasion. This corrupt thought riseth in some, from an imagination that moral suasion is all that is needful for converting a sinner: and in some this thought rises on a better account; the light of the glory of God in the gospel shines so brightly in upon their own hearts, that they fall into this conceit, that no man can stand before that light which they can hold forth: Melancthon's mistake at first, till experience made him wiser. Hast thou a clear knowledge of gospel-mysteries, and the word of exhortation is with thee also, so that thou art qualified to urge, beseech, and plead warmly with sinners on Christ's behalf? Take heed of this snare, lest thou think, that thy wisdom and gifts can promote and carry on the gospel-design on men.

3. This also is checked in the apostle's words, the setting

forth the beauty of the gospel by human art. The truth of the gospel shines best in its bare proposal; and its beauty, in its simple and naked discovery. We may observe from the church-history, that still as soundness of doctrine, and the power of godliness, decayed in the church, the vanity of an affected way of speaking and of writing of divine things came in. Quotations from the fathers, Latin, and languages, are pitiful ornaments unto preaching, if a man design conversion and soul-edification. And yet more despicable are all playing on words, jinglings, and cadencies, (which things are in all the rules of true eloquence justly exploded); and yet some men reckon much on them. But would any man think his friend in earnest with him, that would accost him in any affair with such sort of language and gesture?

Secondly, The positive is, *in demonstration of the Spirit, aud of power*, 1 Cor. ii. 5.

1. Paul preached so as gave a demonstration that the Holy Ghost was in him, sanctifying him. This is a plain and blessed thing. Happy is the minister that manageth his work so, that if the hearers get not a demonstration of great parts and learning, yet they have a demonstration of the sanctifying Spirit of God in the minister.

2. Paul preached so as gave a demonstration that the Spirit of God was with him, assisting and helping him in his work; even when he was amongst them *in much weakness, fear, and trembling*, ver. 3. Happy is the minister that can preach this way. He must be a depender upon assistance from the Holy Ghost.

3. Paul preached so as a demonstration of the power of the Holy Ghost was given to the hearts of the hearers. The Spirit of God so wrought on them by his power in and by Paul's preaching, (2 Cor. iv. 2. *Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God*). This is the principle thing to be aimed at, and it is the proper source of all profitable preaching.

III. To conclude: You that are ministers, suffer a word of exhortation.

Men, brethren, and fathers, you are called to an high and

A

VINDICATION

OF THE

PROTESTANT DOCTRINE

CONCERNING

JUSTIFICATION,

AND OF ITS

PREACHERS AND PROFESSORS,

FROM THE UNJUST CHARGE OF

ANTINOMIANISM.

IN A LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR, TO A MINISTER IN THE COUNTRY.

YOUR earnest desire of information about some differences amongst Nonconformists in London, whereof you hear so much by flying reports, and profess you know so little of the truth thereof, is the cause of this writing.

You know, that not many months ago there was fair-like appearance of unity betwixt the two most considerable parties on that side; and their differences having been rather in practice than principle, about church-order and communion, seemed easily reconcileable, where a spirit of love, and of a sound mind, was at work. But how short was the calm! For quickly arose a greater storm from another quarter; and a quarrel began upon higher points, even on no less than the doctrine of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, and the justification of a sinner by faith alone. Some think, that the reprinting of Dr Crisp's book gave the first rise to it. But we must look farther back for its true spring. It is well known, but little considered, what a great progress *Arminianism* had made in this nation before the beginning of the civil war.

And surely it hath lost little since it ended. What can be the reason why the very parliaments in the reign of James I. and Charles I. were so alarmed with *Arminianism*, as may be read in history, and is remembered by old men; and that now for a long time there hath been no talk, no fear of it; as if *Arminianism* were dead and buried, and no man knows where its grave is? Is not the true reason to be found in its universal prevailing in the nation?

But that which concerneth our case, is, that the middle way betwixt the *Arminians* and the *Orthodox*, had been espoused, and strenuously defended and promoted, by some Nonconformists, of great note for piety and parts; and usually such men that are for middle ways in points of doctrine, have a greater kindness for that extreme they go half-way to, than for that which they go half-way from. And the notions thereof were imbibed by a great many students, who laboured (through the iniquity of the times) under the great disadvantage of the want of grave and sound divines, to direct and assist their studies at universities; and therefore contented themselves with studying such English authors as had gone in a path untrod, both by our predecessors, and by the Protestant universities abroad.

These notions have been preached, and wrote against, by several divines amongst themselves; and the different opinions have been, till of late, managed with some moderation; to which our being all borne down by persecution, did somewhat contribute.

It is a sad, but true observation, That no contentions are more easily kindled, more fiercely pursued, and more hardly composed, than those of divines; sometimes from their zeal for truth; and sometimes from worse principles, that may act in them, as well as in other men.

The subject of the controversy is, about the justifying grace of God in Jesus Christ. Owned it is by both: and both fear it be abused: either by turning it into wantonness; hence the noise of *Antinomianism:* or by corrupting it with the mixture of works; hence the fears, on the other side, of *Arminianism*. Both parties disown the name cast upon them. The one will not be called *Arminians:* and the other hate

both name and thing of *Antinomianism* truly so called. Both sometimes say the same thing, and profess their assent to the doctrinal articles of the Church of England, to the Confession of Faith and Catechisms composed at Westminster, and to the Harmony of the Confessions of all the reformed churches, in these doctrines of grace. And, if both be candid in this profession, it is very strange that there should be any controversy amongst them.

Let us therefore, first, take a view of the parties, and then of their principles. As to the party suspected of *Antinomianism* and *Libertinism*, in this city; it is plain, that the churches wherein they are concerned, are more strict and exact in trying of them that offer themselves unto their communion, as to their faith and holiness, before their admitting them; in the engagements laid on them to a gospel-walking at their admission, and in their inspection over them afterwards. As to their conversations, they are generally of the more regular and exact frame; and the fruits of holiness in their lives, to the praise of God, and honour of the gospel, cannot with modesty be denied. Is it not unaccountable, to charge a people with licentiousness, when the chargers cannot deny, and some cannot well bear the strictness of their walk? It is commonly said, that it is only their principles, and the tendency of them to loose walking, that they blame. But, waving that at present, it seems not fair to charge a people with licentious doctrines, when the professors thereof are approved of for their godliness; and when they do sincerely profess, that their godliness begun with, and is promoted by the faith of their principles. Let it not be mistaken, if I here make a comparison betwixt *Papists* and *Protestants*. The latter did always profess the doctrine of justification by faith alone. This was blasphemy in the Papists ears. They still did, and do cry out against it, as a licentious doctrine, and destructive of good works. Many sufficient answers have been given unto this unjust charge. But to my purpose: The wonder was, that the Papists were not convinced by the splendid holiness of the old believers, and by the visible truth of their holy practice; and their professing, that as long as they lived in the blindness and darkness of popery, they were profane;

and that as soon as God revealed the gospel to them, and had wrought in them the faith thereof, they were sanctified, and led other lives. So witnessed the noble Lord Cobham, who suffered in K. Henry V.'s time, above an hundred years before Luther. His words at his examination before the Archbishop of Canterbury, and his clergy, were these. "As for "that virtuous man, Wickliff, (for with his doctrine he was "charged), whose judgment ye so highly disdain; I shall say "of my part, both before God and man, that before I knew "that despised doctrine of his, I never abstained from sin; "but since I learned therein to fear my Lord God, it hath "otherwise, I trust, been with me. So much grace could I "never find in all your glorious instructions." *Fox's book of Martyrs, vol.* 1. *p.* 640, *col.* 2. *edit.* 1664. And since I am on that excellent book, I entreat you to read Mr Patrick Hamilton's little treatise, to which Frith doth preface, and Fox doth add some explication, *vol.* 2. *p.* 181,—192.; where ye will find the old plain Protestant truth about law and gospel, delivered without any school-terms. To this, add, in your reading, in the same *vol.* 2. *p.* 497,—509. *Heresies and Errors falsely charged on Tindal's writings;* where we will see the old faith of the saints in its simplicity; and the old craft and cunning of the Antichristian party, in slandering the truth. I must, for my part, confess, that these plain declarations of gospel-truth have a quite other favour with me, than the dry insipid accounts thereof given by pretenders to human wisdom.

But passing these things, let us look to principles, and that with respect to their native and regular influence on sanctification. And I am willing that that should determine the matter, next to the consonancy of the principles themselves to the word of God. It can be no doctrine of God, that is not according to godliness. Some think, that if good works, and holiness, and repentance, be allowed no room in justification, that there is no room left for them in the world, and in the practice of believers. So hard seems it to be to some, to keep in their eye the certain fixed bounds betwixt justification and sanctification. There is no difference betwixt a justified and a sanctified man; for he is always the same per-

son that partakes of these privileges. But justification and sanctification differ greatly, in many respects; as is commonly known. But to come a little closer:

The party here suspected of *Antinomianism*, do confidently protest, before God, angels, and men, That they espouse no new doctrine about the grace of God and justification, and the other coincident points, but what the reformers at home and abroad did teach, and all the Protestant churches do own. And that in sum is: "That a law-condemned sinner is freely justified by God's grace, through the redemption that is "in Jesus Christ; that he is justified only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to him by God of his free grace, "and received by faith alone as an instrument; which faith "is the gift of the same grace." For guarding against licentiousness, they constantly teach, out of God's word, "That "without holiness no man can see God: That all that believe "truly on Jesus Christ, as they are justified by the sprinkling "of his blood, so are they sanctified by the effusion of his "Spirit: that all that boast of their faith in Christ, and yet "live after their own lusts, and the course of this world, have "no true faith at all; but do, in their profession, and contradicting practice, blaspheme the name of God, and the "doctrine of his grace; and continuing so, shall perish with "a double destruction, beyond that of the openly profane, "that make no profession." And when they find any such in their communion, which is exceeding rarely, they cast them out as dead branches. They teach, "That as the daily study "of sanctification is a necessary exercise to all that are in Christ; "so the rule of their direction therein, is the holy spotless law "of God in Christ's hand: That the Holy Ghost is the beginner and advancer of this work, and faith in Jesus Christ "the great mean thereof: That no man can be holy till he "be in Christ, and united to him by faith; and that no man "is truly in Christ, but he is thereby sanctified. They preach "the law, to condemn all flesh out of Christ, and to shew "thereby to people the necessity of betaking themselves to "him for salvation." See the savoury words of blessed Tindal, called the *apostle of England*, in his letter to John Frith, written Jan. 1533; *Book of Martyrs, vol.* 2. *p.* 308.

"Expound the law truly, and open the veil of Moses, to con-
"demn all flesh, and prove all men sinners, and all deeds
"under the law, before mercy have taken away the con-
"demnation thereof, to be sin, and damnable; and then as
"a faithful minister, set abroach the mercy of our Lord Je-
"sus, and let the wounded consciences drink of the water of
"him. And then shall your preaching be with power, and
"not as the hypocrites. And the Spirit of God shall work
"with you; and all consciences shall bear record unto you,
"and feel that it is so. And all doctrine that casteth a mist
"on these two, to shadow and hide them, I mean the law of
"God, and mercy of Christ; that resist you with all your
"power." And so do we.

What is there in all this to be offended with? Is not this enough to vindicate our doctrine from any tendency to licentiousness? I am afraid, that there are some things wherein we differ more than they think fit yet to express. And I shall guess at them.

1. The first is about the imputed righteousness of Christ. This righteousness of Christ, in his active and passive obedience, hath been asserted by Protestant divines, to be not only the procuring and meritorious cause of our justification; for this the Papists own; but the matter; as the imputation of it is the form of our justification: though I think, that our logical terms are not so adapted for such divine mysteries. But whatever propriety or impropriety be in such school-terms, the common Protestant doctrine hath been, That a convinced sinner seeking justification, must have nothing in his eye but this righteousness of Christ, as God proposeth nothing else to him; and that God in justifying a sinner, accepts him in this righteousness only, when he imputes it to him.

Now, about the imputed righteousness of Christ some say, "That it belongs only to the person of Christ: he was under "the law, and bound to keep it for himself; that he might "be a fit Mediator, without spot or blemish. That it is a "qualification in the Mediator, rather than a benefit acquired "by him, to be communicated to his people." For they will not allow "this personal righteousness of Christ so be im-"puted to us any otherwise than in the merit of it, as pur-

"chasing for us a more easy law of grace; in the observa-
"tion whereof they place all our justifying righteousness:"
understanding hereby "our own personal inherent holiness,
"and nothing else." They hold, "That Christ died to merit
"this of the Father, *viz.* that we might be justified upon
"easier terms under the gospel, than those of the law of inno-
"cency. Instead of justification by perfect obedience, we are
"now to be justified by our own evangelical righteousness,
"made up of faith, repentance, and sincere obedience." And
if we hold not with them in this, they tell the world, we are
enemies to evangelical holiness, slighting the practice of all
good works, and allowing our hearers to live as they list.
Thus they slander the preachers of free grace, because we do
not place justification in our own inherent holiness; but in
Christ's perfect righteousness, imputed to us upon our believ-
ing in him. Which faith, we teach, purifies the heart, and
always inclines to holiness of life. Neither do we hold any
faith to be true and saving, that doth not shew itself by good
works; without which no man is, or can be justified, either
in his own conscience, or before men. But it doth not hence fol-
low, that we cannot be justified in the sight of God by faith
only, as the apostle Paul asserts the latter, and the apostle
James the former, in a good agreement.

2. There appears to be some difference, or misunderstand-
ing of one another, about the true notion and nature of justi-
fying faith. Divines commonly distinguish betwixt the *direct
act of faith*, and the *reflex act*. The *direct act* is properly justi-
fying and saving faith; by which a lost sinner comes to Christ
and relies upon him for salvation. The *reflex act* is the look
ing back of the soul upon a former act of faith. A rational
creature can reflect upon his own acts, whether they be acts
of reason, faith, or unbelief.

A *direct act* of saving faith, is that by which a lost sinner
goes out of himself to Christ for help, relying upon him only
for salvation. A *reflex act* ariseth from the sense that faith
gives of its own inward act, upon a serious review. The
truth and sincerity of which is further cleared up to the con-
science, by the genuine fruits of an unfeigned faith, appearing
to all men in our good lives, and holy conversation. But for

plain as these things be, yet we find we are frequently mis-
ken by others: and we wonder at the mistake; for we dare
t ascribe to some learned and good men, the principles of
norance, or wilfulness, from whence mistakes in plain cases
ually proceed. When we do press sinners to come to Christ
r a direct act of faith, consisting in an humble reliance upon
m for mercy and pardon; they will understand us, whether
e will or not, of a reflex act of faith, by which a man knows
d believes, that his sins are pardoned, and that Christ is
s: when they might easily know, that we mean no such
ing. Mr Walter Marshall, in his excellent book, lately pub-
hed, hath largely opened this, and the true controversy of
is day, though it be eight or nine years since he died.

3. We seem to differ about the interest, and room, and
lace, that faith hath in justification. That we are justified
y faith in Jesus Christ, is so plainly a New Testament truth,
at no man pretending never so barely to the Christian name,
nies it. The Papists own it; and the Socinians, and Ar-
inians, and all own it. But how different are their senses
f it? And indeed you cannot more speedily and certainly
idge of the spirit of a man, than by his real inward sense of
is phrase, (if you could reach it), *A sinner is justified by faith
Jesus Christ.* Some say, That faith in Jesus Christ justi-
es as it is a work, by the τὸ *credere;* as if it came in the room
f perfect obedience, required by the law. Some, that faith
ustifies, as it is informed and animated by charity. So the
'apists who plainly confound justification and sanctification.
ome say, that faith justifies, as it is a fulfilling of the condi-
on of the new covenant, *If thou believest, thou shalt be saved.*
Nay, they will not hold there; but they will have this faith
o justify, as it hath a principle and fitness in it to dispose to
incere obedience. The plain old Protestant doctrine is, That
he place of faith in justification is only that of a hand or in-
trument, receiving the righteousness of Christ, for which
nly we are justified. So that though great scholars do often
onfound themselves and others, in their disputations about
aith's justifying a sinner; every poor plain believer hath the
narrow of this mystery feeding his heart; and he can readi-
y tell you, That to be justified by faith, is to be justified by
Christ's righteousness, apprehended by faith.

4. We seem to misunderstand one another about the two Adams, and especially the latter. See Rom. v. 12. to the end. In that excellent scripture a comparison is instituted, which if we did duly understand, and agree in, we should not readily differ in the main things of the gospel. The apostle there tells us, that the first Adam stood in the room of all his natural posterity. He had their stock in his hand. While he stood they stood in him; when he fell, they fell with him. By his fall he derived sin and death to all them that spring from him by natural generation. This is the sad side. But he tells us in opposition thereto, and in comparing therewith, that Christ, the second man, is the new head of the redeemed world. He stands in their room: his obedience is theirs; and he communicates to his spiritual offspring, the just contrary to what the first sinful Adam doth to his natural offspring; righteousness instead of guilt and sin, life instead of death, justification instead of condemnation, and eternal life instead of hell deserved. So that I think the 3d, 4th, and 5th chapters of the epistle to the Romans, for the mystery of justification; and the 6th, 7th, and 8th, for the mystery of sanctification, deserve our deep study. But what say others about Christ's being the second Adam? We find them unwilling to speak of it; and when they do, it is quite alien from the scope of the apostle in that chapter. Thus to us they seem to say, "That God as a rector, ruler, governor, hath resolved "to save men by Jesus Christ: That the rule of this govern-"ment is the gospel, as a new law of grace: That Jesus "Christ is set at the head of this rectoral government: That "in that state he sits in glory, ready and able, out of his pur-"chase and merits, to give justification and eternal life to all "that can bring good evidence of their having complied with "the terms and conditions of the law of grace." Thus they antedate the last day, and hold forth Christ as a Judge, rather than a Saviour. Luther was wont to warn people of this distinction, frequently in his comment on the epistle to the Galatians. And no other headship to Christ do we find some willing to admit, but what belongs to his kingly office. As for his suretiship, and being the second Adam, and a public person, some treat it with contempt. I have heard, that Dr

Thomas Goodwin was in his youth an Arminian, or at least inclining that way; but was by the Lord's grace brought off, by Dr Sibb's clearing up to him this same point, of Christ's being the head and representative of all his people, Now though we maintain stedfastly this headship of Jesus Christ, yet we say not, that there is an actual partaking of his fulness of grace, till we be in him by faith; though this *faith* is also *given us on Christ's behalf*, Phil. i. 29. and we *believe through grace*, Acts xviii. 27. And we know no grace, we can call nothing grace, we care for no grace, but what comes from this head, the Saviour of the body. But so much shall serve to point forth the main things of difference and mistakes.

Is it not a little provoking, that some are so captious, that no minister can preach in the hearing of some, "of the free-"dom of God's grace; of the imputation of Christ's righ-"teousness; of sole and single believing on him for righteous-"ness, and eternal life; of the impossibility of a natural man's "doing any good work before he be in Christ; of the im-"possibility of the mixing of man's righteousness and "works, with Christ's righteousness, in the business of justi-"fication; and several other points," but he is immediately called, or suspected to be an *Antinomian?* If we say, that faith in Jesus Christ is neither work, nor condition, nor qualification, in justification; but is a mere instrument, receiving (as an empty hand receiveth the freely given alms) the righteousness of Christ; and that, in its very act, it is a renouncing of all things but the gift of grace; the fire is kindled. So that it is come to that, as Mr Christopher Fowler said, "That he that will not be *Antichristian*, must be called "an *Antinomian*." Is there a minister in London, who did not preach, some twenty, some thirty years ago, according to their standing, that same doctrine now by some called *Antinomian?* Let not Dr Crisp's book be looked upon as the standard of our doctrine. There are many good things in it; and also many expressions in it that we generally dislike. It is true, that Mr Burgess and Mr Rutherford wrote against Antinomianism, and against some that were both Antinomians and Arminians. And it is no less true, that they wrote against the Arminians, and did hate the new scheme of divi-

nity, so much now contended for, and to which we owe all our present contentions. I am persuaded, that if these godly and sound divines were on the present stage, they would be as ready to draw their pens against two books lately printed against Dr Crisp, as ever they were to write against the Doctor's book. Truth is to be defended by truth; but error is often, and unhappily opposed by error under truth's name.

But what shall we do in this case? What shall we do for peace with our brethren? Shall we lie still under their undeserved reproaches; and, for keeping the peace, silently suffer others to beat us unjustly? If it were our own personal concern, we should bear it: if it were only their charging us with ignorance, weakness, and being unstudied divines, (as they have used liberally to call all that have not learned, and dare not believe their new divinity), we might easily pass it by, or put it up. But when we see the pure gospel of Christ corrupted; and an Arminian gospel new vampt, and obtruded on people, to the certain peril of the souls of such as believe it; and our ministry reflected upon, which should be dearer to us than our lives; can we be silent? As we have a charge from the Lord, to deliver to our people what we have received from him; so, as he calls and enables, we are not to *give place by subjection, not for an hour, to such as creep in*, not only *to spy out*, but to destroy, not so much *the gospel-liberty*, as the gospel-salvation we have in Christ Jesus, and to *bring us back under the yoke of legal bondage*. And indeed the case in that epistle to the Galatians and ours has a great affinity.

Is it desired, that we should forbear to make a free offer of God's grace in Christ to the worst of sinners? This cannot be granted by us: for this is the gospel *faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation*, (and therefore worthy of all our preaching of it), *that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and the chief of them*, 1 Tim. i. 15. This was the apostolic practice, according to their Lord's command, Mark xvi. 15, 16. Luke xxiv. 47. They began at Jerusalem, where the Lord of life was wickedly slain by them; and yet life in and through his blood was offered to, and accepted and obtained by many of them. Every believer's experience witnesseth to this, that every one that believes on Jesus Christ,

ıcts that faith as the chief of sinners. Every man that seeth ıimself rightly, thinks so of himself, and therein thinks not ımiss. God only knoweth who is truly the greatest sinner, ınd every humbled sinner will think that he is the man.

Shall we tell men, that unless they be holy, they must not ıelieve on Jesus Christ? that they must not venture on Christ or salvation, till they be qualified and fit to be received and velcomed by him? This were to forbear preaching the gos-el at all, or to forbid all men to believe on Christ. For never vas any sinner qualified for Christ. He is well qualified for us, Cor. i. 30.; but a sinner out of Christ hath no qualification or Christ but sin and misery. Whence should we have any etter, but in and from Christ? Nay, suppose an impossibility, hat a man were qualified for Christ; I boldly assert, that uch a man would not, nor could ever believe on Christ. For aith is a lost, helpless condemned sinner's casting himself on Christ for salvation; and the qualified man is no such person.

Shall we warn people, that they should not believe on Christ oo soon? It is impossible that they should do it too soon. Can a man obey the great *gospel-command* too soon, 1 John ii. 23.? or do the great *work of God* too soon, John vi. 28, 9.? A man may too soon think that he is in Christ; and nat is when it is not so indeed; and this we frequently each. But this is but an idle dream, and not faith. A man may oo soon fancy that he hath faith; but, I hope, he cannot act aith too soon. If any should say, a man may be holy too oon; how would that saying be reflected upon? And yet it s certain, that though no man can be too soon holy, (because e cannot too soon believe on Christ, which is the only spring f true holiness); yet he may, and many do, set about the tudy of that he counts holiness too soon; that is, before *the ree be changed*, Matth. xii. 33, 34, 35.; before he have *the new heart*, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.; and the *Spirit of God dwelling in him*, which is only got by faith in Christ, Gal. iii. 14.; and therefore all this man's studying of holiness, is not only vain labour, but acting of sin. And if this study, and these endeavours, be managed as commonly they are, to obtain justification before God, they are the more wicked works still. And because this point is needful to be known, I would give

you some testimonies for it. Doctrine of the Church of England, in her thirty-nine articles, *art.* 13. "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God; forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ: neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the school-authors say) deserve grace of congruity. Yea, rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin." So *Confession of Faith, chap.* 16. *art.* 7. *Calvin. Instit. lib.* 3. *cap.* 15. *sect.* 6. "They (saith he, speaking of the Popish schoolmen) have found out I know not what moral good works, whereby men are made acceptable to God before they are ingrafted into Christ. As if the scripture lied, when it said, *They are all in death who have not the Son*, 1 John v. 12. If they be in death, how can they beget matter of life? As if it were of no force, *Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin;* as if *evil trees could bring forth good fruit.*" Read the rest of that section. On the contrary, the council of Trent, *sess.* 6. *canon.* 7. says boldly, "Whosoever shall say, That all works done before justification, howsoever they be done, are truly sin, and deserve the hatred of God; let him be anathema." And to give you one more bellowing of the beast, wounded by the light of the gospel, see the same *council, sess.* 6. *canon.* 11. *Si quis dixerit, Gratiam qua justificamur, esse tantum favorem Dei, anathema sit.* This is fearful blasphemy, saith Dr Downham, bishop of Londonderry, in his orthodox book of justification, *lib.* 3. *cap.* 1.; where he saith, "That the Hebrew words which in the Old Testament signify *the grace of God*, do always signify *favour*, and never *grace inherent.* And above fifty testimonies may be brought from the New Testament to prove that by *God's grace* his *favour* is still meant." But what was good church-of-England doctrine at and after the reformation, cannot now go down with some Arminianizing Nonconformists.

If then nothing will satisfy our quarrelling brethren, but either silence as to the main points of the gospel, which we believe, and live by the faith of and look to be saved in, which we have for many years preached, with some seals of

the Holy Ghost in converting sinners unto God, and in building them up in holiness and comfort, by the faith and power of them; which also we vowed to the Lord to preach to all that will hear us, as long as we live, in the day when we gave up ourselves to serve God with our spirit in the gospel of his Son: if either this silence, or the swallowing down of Arminian schemes of the gospel, contrary to the New Testament, and unknown to the reformed churches, in their greatest purity, be the only terms of peace with our brethren; we must then maintain our peace with God, and our own consciences, in the defence of plain gospel-truth, and our harmony with the reformed churches; and in the comfort of these bear their enmity. And though it be usual with them to vilify and contemn such as differ from them, for their fewness, weakness, and want of learning; yet they might know, that the most learned and godly in the Christian world, have maintained and defended the same doctrine we stand for, for some ages. The grace of God will never want, for it can, and will furnish, defenders of it. England hath been blessed with a Bradwardine, an archbishop of Canterbury, against the Pelagians; a Twisse and Ames, against the Arminians. And though they that contend with us, would separate their cause altogether from that of these two pests of the church of Christ, I mean Pelagius and Arminius; yet judicious observers cannot but already perceive a coincidency; and do fear more, when either the force of argument shall drive them out of their lurking-holes, or when they shall think fit to discover their secret sentiments, which yet we but guess at. Then, as we shall know better what they would be at; so it is very like, that they will then find enemies in many whom they have seduced by their craft, and do yet seem to be in their camp; and will meet with opposers, both at home and abroad, that they think not of.

Our doctrine of the justification of a sinner by the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, however it be misrepresented and reflected upon, is yet undeniably recommended by four things.

1. It is a doctrine savoury and precious unto all serious godly persons. Dr Ames's observation holds good as to all

the Arminian divinity, that it is *contra communem sensum fidelium*; "against the common sense of believers." And though this be an argument of little weight with them that value more the judgment of the scribes, and the wise, and disputers of this world, 1 Cor. i. 18, 19, 20, 21. than of all the godly; yet the Spirit of God by John gives us this same argument, 1 John iv. 5, 6. *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.* How evident is it, that several who, by education, or an unsound ministry, having had their natural enmity against the grace of God strengthened, when the Lord by his Spirit hath broke in upon their hearts, and hath raised a serious soul-exercise about their salvation; their turning to God in Christ, and their turning from Arminianism, have begun together? And some of the greatest champions for the grace of God have been persons thus dealt with; as we might instance. And as it is thus with men at their conversion; so is it found afterward, that still as it is well with them in their inner man, so doth the doctrine of grace still appear more precious and savoury. On the other part, all the ungodly and unrenewed have a dislike and disrelish of this doctrine; and are all for the doctrine of doing, and love to hear it; and, in their sorry exercise, are still for doing their own business in salvation; though they be nothing, and can do nothing, but sin, and destroy themselves.

2. It is that doctrine only by which a convinced sinner can be dealt with effectually. When a man is awakened, and brought to that, that all must be brought to, or to worse, *What shall I do to be saved?* Acts xvi. 30, 31. we have the apostolic answer to it, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.* This answer is so old, that with many it seems out of date. But it is still, and will ever be fresh, and new, and savoury, and the only resolution of this grand case of conscience, as long as conscience and the world lasts. No wit or art of man will ever find a crack or flaw in it, or devise another or a better answer; nor can any but this alone heal rightly the wound of an awakened conscience. Let us set this man to seek resolution in this case

of some masters in our Israel. According to their principles, they must say to him, "Repent, and mourn for your known "sins, and leave them and lothe them; and God will have "mercy on you." "Alas! (saith the poor man), my heart is "hard, and I cannot repent aright; yea, I find my heart more "hard and vile than when I was secure in sin." If you speak to this man of qualifications for Christ, he knows nothing of them; if of sincere obedience, his answer is native and ready, "Obedience is the work of a living man, and sincerity is only "in a renewed soul." Sincere obedience is therefore as impossible to a dead unrenewed sinner, as perfect obedience is. Why should not the right answer be given, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved?* Tell him what Christ is, what he hath done and suffered to obtain eternal redemption for sinners, and that according to the will of God and his Father. Give him a plain downright narrative of the gospel-salvation wrought out by the Son of God; tell him the history and mystery of the gospel plainly. It may be the Holy Ghost will work faith thereby, as he did in those first-fruits of the Gentiles, Acts x. 44. If he ask, What warrant he hath to believe on Jesus Christ? tell him, that he hath utter indispensible necessity for it; for without believing on him, he must perish eternally; that he hath God's gracious offer of Christ and all his redemption; with a promise, that upon accepting the offer by faith, Christ and salvation with him is his: that he hath God's express *commandment*, 1 John iii. 23. *to believe on Christ's name;* and that he should make conscience of obeying it, as well as any command in the moral law. Tell him of Christ's ability and good-will to save; that no man was ever rejected by him, that cast himself upon him; that desperate cases are the glorious triumphs of his art of saving. Tell him, that there is no midst between faith and unbelief; that there is no excuse for neglecting the one, and continuing in the other; that believing on the Lord Jesus for salvation, is more pleasing to God, than all obedience to his law; and that unbelief is the most provoking to God, and the most damning to man, of all sins. Against the greatness of his sins, the curse of the law, and the severity of God as Judge, there is no relief to be held forth to him, but the free and

boundless grace of God in the merit of Christ's satisfaction by the sacrifice of himself. If he should say, What is it to believe on Jesus Christ: As to this, I find no such question in the word: but that all did some way understand the notion of it; the Jews that did not believe on him, John vi. 28, 29, 30.; the chief priests and Pharisees, John vii. 48.; the blind man, John ix. 35. When Christ asked him, *Believest thou on the Son of God?* he answered, *Who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?* Immediately, when Christ had told him, ver. 37. he saith not, *What is it to believe on him?* but, *Lord, I believe; and worshipped him:* and so both professed and acted faith in him. So the father of the lunatic, Mark ix. 23, 24.; the eunuch, Acts viii. 37. They all, both Christ's enemies and his disciples, knew that faith in him was a believing, that the man Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, the Messiah, and Saviour of the world, so as to receive, and look for salvation in his name, Acts iv. 12. This was the common report, published by Christ, and his apostles and disciples; and known by all that heard it. If he yet ask, What he is to believe? you tell him, that he is not called to believe, that he is in Christ, and that his sins are pardoned, and he a justified man; but that he is to believe God's record concerning Christ, 1 John v. 10, 11, 12.; and *this record is, that God giveth* (that is, offereth) *to us eternal life in his Son Jesus Christ;* and that all that with the heart believe this report, and rest their souls on these glad tidings, shall be saved, Rom. x. 9, 10, 11. And thus he is to *believe, that he may be justified*, Gal. ii. 16. If he still say, That this believing is hard, this is a good doubt, but easily resolved. It bespeaks a man deeply humbled. Any body may see his own impotence to obey the law of God fully; but few find the difficulty of believing. For his resolution, ask him, What it is he finds makes believing difficult to him? Is it unwillingness to be justified and saved? Is it unwillingness to be so saved by Jesus Christ, to the praise of God's grace in him, and to the voiding of all boasting in himself? This he will surely deny. Is it a distrust of the truth of the gospel-record? This he dare not own. Is it a doubt of Christ's ability, or good-will to save? This is to contradict the testimony of God in the gospel. Is it because he doubts

of an interest in Christ and his redemption? You tell him, that believing on Christ makes up the interest in him. If he say, That he cannot believe on Jesus Christ, because of the difficulty of the acting this faith; and that a divine power is needful to draw it forth, which he finds not; you tell him, that believing in Jesus Christ is no work, but a resting on Jesus Christ; and that this pretence is as unreasonable, as that if a man wearied with a journey, and who is not able to go one step further, should argue, "I am so tired, that I am not able to "lie down;" when indeed he can neither stand nor go. The poor wearied sinner can never believe on Jesus Christ, till he finds he can do nothing for himself; and in his first believing doth always apply himself to Christ for salvation, as a man hopeless and helpless in himself. And by such reasonings with him from the gospel, the Lord will (as he hath often done) convey faith, and joy and peace by believing.

3. This doctrine of free justification by faith alone, hath this advantage, That it suits all men's spirits and frame in their serious approaches to God in worship. Men may think and talk boldly of inherent righteousness, and of its worth and value; of good works, and frames, and dispositions: but when men present themselves before the Lord, and have any discoveries of his glory, all things in themselves will disappear, and be looked upon as nothing. Zophar, though the hottest speaker of Job's friends, did yet speak rightly to him, Job xi. 4, 5. *For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes. But, O that God would speak!* And so Job found it, when God displayed his glory to him, and that only in the works of creation and providence, chap. xxxviii. xxxix. He then changed his note, Job xl. 4, 5. and xlii. 2,—6. So was it with Isaiah, chap. vi. 5. till pardoning grace was imparted to him. No man can stand before this holy Lord God, with any peace and comfort, unless he have God himself to stay upon. His grace and mercy in Jesus Christ, can only preserve a man from being consumed; and the faith of it from being confounded. Hence we see the difference betwixt mens frame in their disputes and doctrine about these points, and their own sense and pleadings with God in prayer.

4. This doctrine of justification by faith without any mix-

tures of man, (however, and by what names and titles soever they be dignified or distinguished), hath this undoubted advantage, That it is that which all not judicially hardened and blinded, do, or would, or must betake themselves unto, when dying. How loth would men be to plead that cause on a deathbed, which they so stoutly stand up for with tongue and pen, when at ease, and that evil day far away? They seem to be jealous, lest God's grace and Christ's righteousness have too much room, and mens works too little, in the business of justification. But was there ever a sensible dying person exercised with this jealousy as to himself? Even bloody Stephen Gardiner, when a-dying, could answer Dr Day, Bishop of Chichester, who offered comfort to him by this doctrine, "What, my Lord, will you open that gap now? Then fare-"wel altogether. To me, and such other in my case, you "may speak it; but open this window to the people, then "farewel altogether." *Book of Martyrs, vol.* 3. *p.* 450. In which words, he bewrayed a conviction of the fitness of the doctrine to dying persons, and his knowledge that it tended to the destroying the kingdom of Antichrist. As Fox, in the same *Book of Martyrs, vol.* 2. *p.* 46. gives this as the reason of Luther's success against Popery, above all former attempts of preceding witnesses. "But (saith he) Luther gave the stroke, "and plucked down the foundation, and all by opening one "vein, long hid before, wherein lieth the touchstone of all "truth and doctrine, as the only principal origin of our salva-"tion; which is, our free justification, by faith only, in Christ "the Son of God." Consider how it is with the most holy and eminent saints when dying. Did ye ever see or hear any boasting of their works and performances? They may, and do own, to the praise of his grace, what they have been made to be, what they have been helped to do or suffer for Christ's sake. But when they draw near to the awful tribunal, what else is in their eye and heart, but only free grace, ransoming blood, and a well-ordered covenant in Christ the Surety? They cannot bear to hear any make mention to them of their holiness, their own grace and attainments. In a word, the doctrine of conditions, qualifications, and rectoral government, and the distribution of rewards and punishments, according to

the new law of grace, will make but an uneasy bed to a dying man's conscience; and will leave him in a very bad condition at present, and in dread of worse, when he is feeling, in his last agonies, that *the wages of sin is death*, if he cannot by faith add, *But the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord*, Rom. vi. 23. He is a wise and happy man that anchors his soul on that rock, at which he can ride out the storm of death. Why should men contend for that in their life, that they know they must renounce at their death? or neglect that truth now, that they must betake themselves unto then? Why should a man build a house, which he must leave in a storm, or be buried in its ruins? Many architects have attempted to make a sure house of their own righteousness: but it is without a foundation; and must fall, or be thrown down sorrowfully by the foolish builder; which is the better way. It is a great test of the truth of the doctrine about the way of salvation, when it is generally approved of by sensible dying men. And what the universal sense of all such in this case is, as to the righteousness of Christ, and their own, is obvious to any man. He was an ingenuous Balaamite, who being himself a Papist, said to a Protestant, "Our religion is "best to live in, and your's best to die in."

But notwithstanding of these great advantages (and they are but a few of many) that this doctrine is attended with, there are not a few disadvantages it labours under; which though they are rather to its commendation than reproach, yet they do hinder its welcome and reception. As,

1. This doctrine is a spiritual mystery, and lieth not level to a natural understanding, 1 Cor. ii. 10, 14. Working for life, a man naturally understands; but believing for life, he understands not. To mend the old man, he knows; but to put on the new man by faith, is a riddle to him. The study of holiness, and to endeavour to square his life according to God's law, he knows a little of, though he can never do it; but to draw sanctification from Christ by faith, and to walk holily, in and through the force of the Spirit of Christ in the heart by faith, is mere canting to him. A new life he understands a little; but nothing of a new birth and regeneration. He never saw himself stark dead. Nay, not only it is unknown

to the natural man, but he is by his natural state an enemy to it. He neither doth, nor can know it, nor approve of it, 1 Cor. ii. 14. *Wisdom*, (that is, Christ's way of saving men revealed in the gospel) *is justified of all her children*, and of them only, Matth. xi. 19. Luke vii. 29, 30, 35. This enmity in men to the wisdom of God, is the cause not only of this contempt of its ministry, but is a temptation to many ministers to patch up and frame a gospel that is more suited to, and taking with, and more easily understood by such men, than the true gospel of Christ is. This Paul complains of in others, and vindicates himself from, 1 Cor. i. 17. and ii. 2. He warns others against it, Col. ii. 8. 2 Cor. xi. 3, 4. Gal. i. 6, 7, 8, 9. And it is certain, that doing for life is more suited to corrupt nature, than believing is.

2. Our opposers in this doctrine have the many for them, and against us; as they of old boasted, John vii. 48. This they have no ground to glory in, though they do; nor we to be ashamed of the truth, because we cannot vie numbers with them. With our opposers are all these sorts, (and they make a great number); though I do not say or think, that all our opposers are to be ranked in any of these lists; for some, both godly and learned, may mistake us, and the truth, in this matter. 1. They have all the ignorant people, that know nothing of either law or gospel. They serve God, (they say, but most falsely); and hope that God will be merciful to them, and save them. To all such, both the clear explication of God's law, and the mysteries of the gospel, are strange things. Yet sincere obedience they love to hear of; for all of them think there is some sincerity in their hearts, and that they can do somewhat. But of faith in Christ they have no knowledge; except by faith you understand a dream of being saved by Jesus Christ, though they know nothing of him, or of his way of saving men, nor of the way of being saved by him. 2. All formalists are on their side; people that place their religion in trifles, because they are strangers to the substance thereof. 3. All proud secure sinners are against us, that *go about*, with the Jews, *to establish their own righteousness*, Rom. x. 3. The secure are whole, and see no need of the physician; the proud have physic at home, and despise that

that came down from heaven. 4. All the zealous devout, people in a natural religion, are utter enemies to the gospel. By a natural religion, I mean that that is the product of the remnants of God's image in fallen man, a little improved by the light of God's word. All such cannot endure to hear, that God's law must be perfectly fulfilled in every tittle of it, or no man can be saved by doing; that they must all perish for ever, that have not the righteousness of a man that never sinned, who is also God over all blessed for ever, to shelter and cover them from a holy God's anger, and to render them accepted of him: that this righteousness is put on by the grace of God, and a man must betake himself to it, and receive it as a naked blushing sinner: that no man can do any thing that is good, till gospel-grace renew him, and make him first a good man. This they will never receive, but do still think that a man may grow good by doing good.

3. Natural reason is very fertile in its objections and cavils against the doctrine of the grace of God; and especially when this corrupt reason is polished by learning and strong natural parts. When there are many to broach such doctrine, and many so disposed to receive it, is it any wonder that the gospel-truth makes little progress in the world? Nay, were it not for the divine power that supports it, and the promises of its preservation, its enemies are so many and strong, and true friends so few and feeble, we might fear its perishing from the earth. But we know it is impossible. And if the Lord have a design of mercy to these nations, and hath a vein of his election to dig up amongst us, we make no doubt, but the glory of Christ, as a crucified Saviour, shall yet be displayed in the midst of us, to the joy of all that love his salvation, and to the shame of others, Isa. lxvi. 5.

4. I might add the great declension of some of the reformed churches from the purity and simplicity of that doctrine they were first planted in. The new Methodists about the grace of God, had too great an increase in the French churches. And, which was very strange, this declension advanced amongst them, at the same time when Jansenism was spreading amongst many of the church of Rome: so that a man might have seen Papists growing better in their doctrine, and

Protestants growing worse. See Mr Gale's *Idea of Jansenism*, with Dr Owen's preface. What there is of this amongst us in England, I leave the reader to Mr Jenkyn's *Celeusma*, and to the *Naked Truth*, part 4. And if there be any warping toward Arminian doctrine by some on our side, in order to ingratiate themselves with that church that hath the secular advantages to dispense, and to make way for some accommodation with them, I had rather wait in fear till a further discovery of it, than offer to guess at.

5. *Lastly*, It is no small disadvantage this doctrine lies under from the spirit of this day we live in. A light, frothy, trifling temper, prevails generally; doctrines of the greatest weight are talked of and treated about, with a vain unconcerned frame of spirit; as if men contended rather about opinions and school-points, than about the oracles of God, and matters of faith. But, if mens hearts were seen by themselves; if sin were felt; if mens consciences were enlivened; if God's holy law were known in its exactness and severity, and the glory and majesty of the lawgiver shining before mens eyes; if men were living as leaving time, and launching forth into eternity; the gospel-salvation by Jesus Christ would be more regarded.

Object. 1. Is there not a great decay amongst professors in real practical godliness? Are we like the old Protestants, or the old Puritans? I answer, That the decay and degeneracy is great, and heavily to be bewailed. But what is the cause? and what will be its cure? Is it because the doctrine of morality, and virtue, and good works, is not enough preached? This cannot be: for there hath been for many years a public ministry in the nation, that make these their constant themes. Yet the land is become as Sodom for all lewdness; and the tree of profaneness is so grown, that the sword of the magistrate hath not yet been able to lop off any of its branches. Is it because men have too much faith in Christ? or too little? or none at all? Would not faith in Christ increase holiness? did it not always so? and will it not still do it? Was not the holiness of the first Protestants eminent and shining? and yet they generally put assurance in the definition of their faith. We cannot say, that gospel-holiness hath prospered much by

the correction or mitigation of that harsh-like definition. The certain spring of this prevailing wickedness in the land, is people's ignorance and unbelief of the gospel of Christ; and that grows by many prophets that speak lies to them in the name of the Lord.

Object. 2. But do not some abuse the grace of the gospel, and turn it into wantonness? *Answer.* Yes; some do, ever did, and still will do so. But it is only the ill-understood and not believed doctrine of grace that they abuse. The grace itself no man can abuse; for its power prevents its abuse. Let us see how Paul, that blessed herald of this grace, (as he was an eminent instance of it), dealeth with this objection, Rom. vi. 1, &c. What doth he to prevent this abuse? Is it by extenuating what he had said, chap. v. 20. that *grace abounds much more, where sin had abounded?* Is it by mincing grace smaller, that men may not choke upon it, or surfeit by it? Is it by mixing something of the law with it, to make it more wholsome? No: but only by plain asserting the power and influence of this grace, wherever it really is; as at length in that chapter. This grace is all treasured up in Christ Jesus, offered to all men in the gospel, poured forth by our Lord in the working of faith, and drunk in by the elect in the exercise of faith; and becomes in them a living spring, which will, and must break out and spring up in all holy conversation. He exhorts them to drink in more and more of this grace by faith. And as for such as pretend to grace, and live ungodly, the Spirit of God declares, they are void of grace, which is always fruitful in good works, 2 Peter ii. and Jude's epistle. The apostle orders the churches to cast such out, 1 Cor. v. 2 Tim. iii. 5.; and to declare to them, as Peter did to a professor, Acts viii. 20, 21. that *they have no part nor portion in this matter, for their heart is not right in the sight of God;* though the doctrine be right, that they hypocritically profess.

But if our brethren will not forbear their charge of Antinomianism, we intreat them that they will give it in justly. As, 1. On them that say, that the sanction of the holy law of God is repealed; so that no man is now under it, either to be condemned for breaking it, or to be saved by

keeping it; which to us is rank Antinomianism and Arminianism both: yea, that it doth not now require perfect holiness. But indeed what can it require? for it is no law, if its sanction be repealed. 2. On them let the charge lie, that are ungodly under the name of Christianity. And both they and we know where to find such true Antinomians in great abundance, who yet are never called by that name. And is it not somewhat strange, that men who have so much zeal against an Antinomian principle, have so much kindness for true Antinomians in practice? 3. Let him be called by this ugly name, that judgeth not the holy law and word of God written in the Old and New Testament to be a perfect rule of life to all believers, and saith not that all such should study conformity thereunto, Rom. xii. 2. 4. That encourageth himself in sin, and hardeneth himself in impenitence, by the doctrine of the gospel. No man that knows and believes the gospel, can do so. What some hypocrites may do, is nothing to us, who disown all such persons and practices: and own no principle that can really encourage the one, or influence the other. 5. That thinketh holiness is not necessary to all that would be saved. We maintain, not only that it is necessary to, but that it is a great part of salvation. 6. Whoever thinks, that when a believer comes short in obeying God's law, he sins not; and that he ought not to mourn because of it as provoking to God, and hurtful to the new creation in him; and that he needs not renew the exercise of faith and repentance for repeated washing and pardoning. Lastly, That say, that a sinner is actually justified before he be united to Christ by faith. It is strange, that such that are charged with this, of all men do most press on sinners to believe on Jesus Christ, and urge the damnation threatened in the gospel upon all unbelievers. That there is a decreed justification from eternity, particular and fixed as to all the elect, and a virtual perfect justification of all the redeemed, in and by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Isaiah liii. 11. Rom. iv. 25. Heb. ix. 26, 28. and x. 14. is not yet called in question by any amongst us; and more is not craved, but that a sinner, for his actual justification, must lay hold on and plead this redemption in Christ's blood by faith.

But, on the other hand, we glory in any name of reproach (as the honourable reproach of Christ) that is cast upon us for asserting the absolute boundless freedom of the grace of God, which excludes all merit, and every thing like it; the absoluteness of the covenant of grace, (for the covenant of redemption was plainly and strictly a conditional one, and the noblest of all conditions was in it. The Son of God's taking on him man's nature, and offering it in sacrifice, was the strict condition of all the glory and reward promised to Christ and his seed, Isaiah liii. 10, 11.), wherein all things are freely promised, and that faith that is required for sealing a man's interest in the covenant is promised in it, and wrought by the grace of it, Eph. ii. 8. That faith at first is wrought by, and acts upon a full and absolute offer of Christ, and of all his fulness; an offer that hath no condition in it, but that native one to all offers, acceptance; and in the very act of this acceptance, the accepter doth expressly disclaim all things in himself, but sinfulness and misery. That faith in Jesus Christ doth justify (although by the way it is to be noted, that it is never written in the word, that faith justifieth actively, but always passively: that a man is justified by faith, and that God justifieth men by, and through faith; yet admitting the phrase) only as a mere instrument receiving that imputed righteousness of Christ, for which we are justified; and that this faith, in the office of justification, is neither condition nor qualification, nor our gospel-righteousness, but in its very act a renouncing of all such pretences.

We proclaim the market of grace to be free, Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3. It is Christ's last offer and lowest, Rev. xxii. 17. If there be any price or money spoke of, it is *no price, no money.* And where such are the terms and conditions, if we be forced to call them so, we must say, that they look liker a renouncing, than a boasting of any qualifications or conditions. Surely the terms of the gospel-bargain are, God's free giving and our free taking and receiving.

We are not ashamed of teaching the ineffectualness of the law, and all the works of it, to give life; either that of justification, or of regeneration and sanctification, or of eternal life: That the law of God can only damn all sinners; that it

only rebukes, and thereby irritates and increases sin; and can never subdue it, till gospel-grace come with power upon the heart; and then when the law is written in the heart, it is copied out in the life.

That we call men to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, in that case the first Adam brought them to, and left them in; in that case that the law finds and leaves them in, guilty, filthy, condemned: out of which case they can only be delivered by Christ, and by believing on him.

That we tell sinners, that Jesus Christ will surely welcome all that come to him; and as he will not cast them out for their sinfulness, in their nature and by-past life, so neither for their misery, in the want of such qualifications and graces that he only can give.

That we do hold forth the propitiation in Christ's blood, as the only thing to be in the eye of a man that would believe on Christ unto justification of life; and that by this faith alone a sinner is justified, and God is justified in doing so.

That God *justifieth the ungodly*, Rom. iv. 5. neither by making him godly before he justify him, nor leaving him ungodly after he hath justified him; but that the same grace that justifies him, doth immediately sanctify him.

If for such doctrine we be called *Antinomians*, we are bold to say, that there is some ignorance of, or prejudice at the known Protestant doctrine, in the hearts of the reproachers.

That there are some things we complain of. As,

1. That they load their brethren so grievously with unjust calumnies, either directly, or by consequence: as when they preach up holiness, and the necessity of it, as if it were their proper doctrine, and disowned by us; when they cannot but know in their consciences, that there is no difference betwixt them and us, about the nature and necessity of holiness, but only about its spring and place in salvation. We derive it from Jesus Christ, and faith in him; and know assuredly that it can spring from nothing else. We place it betwixt justification and glory, and that is its scripture-place; and no where else can it be found or stand, let them try it as much and as long as they will.

2. That they seem very zealous against Antinomianism, and forget the other extreme of Arminianism; which is far more common, as dangerous, and far more natural to all men. For though there have been, and may be this day, some true Antinomians, either through ignorance, or weakness, reeling to that extreme, or by the heat of contention with, and hatred of Arminianism, (as it is certain, some very good and learned men have inclined to Arminianism, through their hatred of Antinomianism, and have declared so much): and some may, and do corrupt the doctrine of the gospel, through the unrenewedness of their hearts: yet how destructive soever this abuse may be to the souls of the seduced, such an appearance of Antinomianism is but a meteor or comet, that will soon blaze out, and its folly will be quickly hissed off the stage. But the principles of Arminianism are the natural dictates of a carnal mind, which is enmity both to the law of God, and to the gospel of Christ; and, next to the dead sea of Popery, (into which also this stream runs), have, since Pelagius to this day, been the greatest plague of the church of Christ, and it is like will be till his second coming.

3. We do also justly complain, that, in their opposing of true Antimonian errors, and particularly the alledged tenets of Dr Crisp, they hint that there is a party of ministers and professors that defend them; whereas we can defy them to name one minister in London at least, that doth so.

4. That expressions capable of a good sense, are strenuously perverted, contrary to the scope of the writer or speaker. But this and such like are the usual methods of unfair contenders. Were the like methods taken on the other side, how many Popish, Arminian, yea and Socinian expressions, might be published? If any gospel-truth be preached or published, that reflects on the idol of self-righteousness, and justification thereby, it is soon quarrelled with. But reproaches cast on the free grace of God, and the imputed righteousness of Christ, are with them, if not approved, yet but venial, well-meant mistakes. Let mens stated principles be known, and their expressions explained accordingly, or mistakes and contentions will be endless.

5. We do also complain, that love to peace hath made

many grave and sound divines forbear to utter their minds freely in public on these points: whereby the adverse party is emboldened; and such ministers as dare not purchase peace by silence, when so great truths are undermined, are exposed as a mark. But we do not question but these worthy brethren, when they shall see the points of controversy accurately stated (as they may shortly), will openly appear on truth's side, as we know their hearts are for it.

6. *Lastly*, We complain, that the scheme of the gospel contended for by our opposers, is clouded, vailed, and darkened by school terms; new, uncouth, and unscriptural phrases; whereby as they think to guard themselves against opposition, so they do increase the jealousies of their brethren, and keep their principles from the knowledge of ordinary people, who are as much concerned in those points as any scholar or divine.

This controversy looks like a very bad omen. We thought we might have healed our old breaches, in smaller things; and, behold, a new one is threatened in the greatest matters. We did hope, that the good old Protestant doctrine had been rooted and rivetted in the hearts of all the ministers on our side; but now we find the contrary, and that the sour leaven of Arminianism works strongly. Their advocates do not yet own the name; but the younger sort are more bold and free: and with them no books or authors are in esteem and use, but such as are for the new rational method of divinity. (Rational is a fitter commendation of a philosopher, than of a divine: and yet it is somewhat better applied to a divine, than to divinity; for true divinity hath a higher and nobler original than man's reason, even divine revelation; and it can never be rightly learned by them that have no higher principle in them than reason, even the teaching of the Holy Ghost.) But for Luther, Calvin, Zanchy, Twisse, Ames, Perkins, and divines of their spirit and stamp, they are generally neglected and despised.

We were in hope, that after the Lord had so signally appeared for his truth and people, in preserving both, under the rage of that Antichristian spirit of persecution, and apostasy to gross Popery, that wrought so mightily under the two last

reigns, and when he had given us the long-desired mercy of a legal establishment of our gospel-liberty in this, that all hearts and hands should have been unanimously employed in the advancing of the work of Christ. But we find, that as we have for a long time lost, in a great measure, the power, we are now in no small danger of losing also the purity of the gospel. And without them what signifies liberty!

It is undoubted, that the devil designs the obstructing of the course of the gospel; and in this he hath often had the service of the tongues and pens of good men, as well as of bad. Yet we are not without hope; that the Lord, in his wisdom and mercy, will defeat him; and that these contentions may yet have good fruit and a good issue.

For furthering of this good end, let me request a few things of my brethren.

1. Let us not receive reports suddenly of one another. In times of contention, many false reports are raised, and rashly believed. This is both the fruit and the fuel of contention. For all the noise of Antinomianism, I must declare, that I do not know (and I have both opportunity and inclination to inquire) any one Antinomian minister or Christian in London, who is really such as their reproachers paint them out, or such as Luther and Calvin wrote against.

2. Let us make Christ crucified our great study, as Christians; and the preaching of him our main work, as ministers. 1 Cor. ii. 2. Paul determined to know nothing else. But many manage the ministry, as if they had taken up a contrary determination, even to know any thing, *save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* We are amazed to see so many ashamed of the cross of Christ, and to behave as if they accounted the tidings of salvation by the slain Son of God, an old antiquated story, and unfit to be daily preached. And what comes in the room thereof, is not unknown, nor is it worth the mentioning. For all things that come in Christ's room, and justle him out, either of hearts or pulpits, are alike abominable to a Christian. How many sermons may a man hear, and read when printed, yea, and books written, about they way to heaven, wherein is hardly the name of Jesus Christ? And if he be named, it is the name of Christ as a Judge and Lawgiver,

rather than that of a Saviour. And as little room hath Ch in many mens prayers; except it be in the conclusion. Wh we cannot avoid the observing of those sad things, let it b sharp spur to us, to preach Christ more, to pray more in name, and to live more to his praise. Let us not be decei with that pretence, That Christ may be preached, when he not named. The preaching of the gospel is the naming Christ, and so called, Rom. xv. 20. And Paul was to *b Christ's name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children Israel,* Acts ix. 15.

3. Let us study hard, and pray much, to know the tru and to cleave unto it. It is an old observation, *Ante Pe gium securius loquebantur patres:* "Before Pelagius even t "fathers spoke more carelessly;" meaning well, and fear no mistakes in their hearers. Now it is not so; the mo careful should we be in our doctrine. Let us search our ov consciences, and see how we ourselves are justified befo God. So Paul argued, Gal. ii. 15, 16. And let us bri forth that doctrine to our people, that we find in our Bibl and have felt the power of upon our own hearts.

4. Let us not run into extremes, upon the right or l hand, through the heat of contention; but carefully keep t good old way of the Protestant doctrine, wherein so ma thousands of saints and martyrs of Jesus have lived holi and died happily, who never heard of our new schemes a notions.

And, for this end, let us take and cleave to the test of t Assembly's Confession of Faith and Catechisms. More v own not ourselves, more we crave not of our brethren; a because we deal fairly and openly, I shall set it down *verb tim. Conf. chap.* xi. *Of justification. Art.* 1. "Those who "God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth: not by i "fusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sin "and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteou "not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, b "for Christ's sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the a "of believing, or any other evangelical obedience, to the "as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience a "satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resti

"on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they "have, not of themselves, it is the gift of God."

Art. 2. "Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and "his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification. "Yet it is not alone in the person justified, but is ever ac- "companied with all other saving graces; and is no dead "faith, but worketh by love."

Art. 3. "Christ, by his obedience and death, did fully "discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and "did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father's "justice in their behalf. Yet, in as much as he was given by "the Father for them, and his obedience and satisfaction ac- "cepted in their stead, and both freely, not for any thing in "them, their justification is only of free grace; that both the "exact justice, and rich grace of God, might be glorified in "the justification of sinners."

Art. 4. "God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all "the elect; and Christ did, in the fulness of time, die for "their sins, and rise again for their justification: neverthe- "less they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit doth, in "due time, actually apply Christ unto them."

Art. 5. "God doth continue to forgive the sins of those "that are justified. And although they can never fall from "the state of justification; yet they may, by their sins, fall "under God's fatherly displeasure; and not have the light of "his countenance restored unto them, until they humble "themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their "faith and repentance."

Art. 6. "The justification of believers under the Old Tes- "tament was, in all these respects, one and the same with the "justification of believers under the New Testament." This is the whole chapter exactly.

Larger Catechism. Q. "How doth faith justify a sinner "in the sight of God? *Answ.* Faith justifies a sinner in the "sight of God, not because of those other graces which do "always accompany it; or of good works, that are the fruits "of it; nor as if the grace of faith, or any act thereof, were "imputed to him for his justification; but only as it is an in-

" strument, by which he receiveth and applieth Christ and " his righteousness."

Let these weighty words be but heartily assented to in their plain and native sense, and we are one in this great point of justification. But can any considering man think, that the new scheme of a real change, repentance, and sincere obedience, as necessary to be found in a person that may lawfully come to Christ for justification; of faith's justifying as it is the spring of sincere obedience; of a man's being justified by, and upon his coming up to the terms of the new law of grace, (a new word, but of an old and ill meaning:) can any man think, that this scheme, and the sound words of the Reverend Assembly, do agree? Surely, if such a scheme had been offered to that grave, learned, and orthodox synod, it would have had a more severe censure passed upon it, than I am willing to name.

Do not we find, in our particular dealings with souls, the same principles I am now opposing?

When we deal with the carnal, secure, careless sinners, (and they are a vast multitude), and ask them a reason of that hope of heaven they pretend to, is not this their common answer: " I live inoffensively; I keep God's law as well as I " can; and wherein I fail, I repent, and beg God's mercy " for Christ's sake. My heart is sincere, though my know- " ledge and attainments be short of others? If we go on to " inquire further, What acquaintance they have with Jesus " Christ? what applications their souls have made to him? " what workings of faith on him? what use they have made " of his righteousness for justification, and his Spirit for sancti- " fication? what they know of living by faith in Jesus Christ?" we are barbarians to them. And in this sad state many thousands in England live, and die, and perish eternally. Yet so thick is the darkness of the age, that many of them live here and go hence, with the reputation of good Christians: and some of them may have their funeral sermon and praises preached by an ignorant flattering minister; though it may be the poor creatures never did, in the whole course of their life, nor at their death, employ Jesus Christ so much for an entry to heaven, purchased by his blood, and only accessible

by faith in him, as a poor Turk doth Mahomet, for a room in his beastly paradise. How common and fearful a thing is this in this land and city!

When we come to deal with a poor awakened sinner, who seeth his lost state, and that he is condemned by the law of God; we find the same principles working in him: for they are natural, and therefore universal in all men, and hardly rooted out of any. We find him sick and wounded: we tell him where his help lies, in Jesus Christ; what his proper work is, to apply to him by faith. What is his answer? "Alas! saith the man, I have been and I am so vile a sinner, my heart is so bad, and so full of plagues and corruptions, that I cannot think of believing on Christ. But if I had but repentance, and some holiness in heart and life, and such and such gracious qualifications, I would then believe:" when indeed this his answer is as full of nonsense, ignorance, and pride, as words can contain or express. They imply, 1. "If I were pretty well recovered, I would employ the Physician, Christ. 2. That there is some hope to work out these good things by myself, without Christ. 3. And when I come to Christ with a price in my hand, I shall be welcome. 4. That I can come to Christ when I will." So ignorant are people naturally of faith in Jesus Christ; and no words or warnings repeated, nor plainest instructions, can beat into mens heads and hearts, that the first coming to Christ by faith, or believing on him, is not a believing we shall be saved by him; but a believing on him, that we may be saved by him. And it is less to be wondered at, that ignorant people do not, when so many learned men will not understand it.

When we deal with a proud, self-righteous hypocrite, we find the same principles of enmity against the grace of the gospel. A profane person is not so enraged at the rebukes of sin from the law, as these Pharisees are at the discovery of their ruin by unbelief. They cannot endure to have their idol of self-righteousness touched; neither by the spirituality of God's law, that condemns all men, and all their works, while out of Christ; nor by the gospel, which reveals another righteousness than their own, by which they must be saved: but they

will have God's ark of the covenant to stand as a captive in the temple of their Dagon of self-righteousness, until the vengeance of God's despised covenant overthrow both the temple, and idol, and worshippers.

There is not a minister that dealeth seriously with the souls of men, but he finds an Arminian scheme of justification in every unrenewed heart. And is it not sadly to be bewailed, that divines should plead that same cause, that we daily find the devil pleading in the hearts of all natural men? and that instead of *casting down*, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. they should be making defences for such *strong holds*, as must either be levelled with the dust, or the rebel that holds them out must eternally perish?

It is no bad way of studying the gospel, and of attaining more light into it, that may be used in dealing particularly with the consciences of all sorts of men, as we have occasion. More may be learned this way, than out of many large books. And if ministers would deal more with their own consciences, and the consciences of others, in and about these points, that are most properly cases of conscience, we should find an increase of gospel-light, and a growing fitness to preach aright; as Paul did, 2 Cor. iv. 2. *By manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

Let us keep up, in our hearts and doctrine, a reverend regard of the holy law of God, and suffer not a reflecting, disparaging word or thought of it. The great salvation is contrived with a regard to it; and the satisfaction given to the law by the obedience and death of Christ our surety, hath made it glorious and honourable, more than all the holiness of saints on earth, or of the glorified in heaven, and than all the torments of the damned in hell; though they do also magnify the law, and make it honourable. But if men will teach, that the law, and obedience unto it, whether perfect or sincere, is the righteousness we must be found in, and stand in, in our pleading for justification; they *neither understand what they say, nor whereof they affirm*, 1 Tim. i. 7. They *become debtors to it*, and *Christ profits them nothing*, Gal. ii. 21. and v. 2, 5. And we know what will become of that man, that hath his debts to the law to pay, and hath no interest in the surety's payment. Yet many such offer their own silver, which, what-

ever coin of man be upon it, is reprobate, and rejected both by law and gospel.

Let us carefully keep the bounds clear betwixt the law and gospel; which "whosoever doth, is a right perfect divine," saith blessed Luther, in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians: a book that hath more plain sound gospel, than many volumes of some other divines. Let us keep the law as far from the business of justification, as we would keep condemnation, its contrary. For the law and condemnation are inseparable, but by the intervention of Jesus Christ our surety, Gal. iii. 10,—14. But in the practice of holiness, the fulfilled law given by Jesus Christ to believers as a rule, is of great and good use to them; as hath been declared.

Lastly, Be exact in your communion and church-administrations. If any walk otherwise than it becometh the gospel, if any abuse the doctrine of grace to licentiousness; draw the rod of discipline against them the more severely, that ye know so many wait for your halting, and are ready to speak evil of the ways and truths of God.

The wisdom of God sometimes orders the different opinions of men about his truth, for the clearing and confirming of it; while each side watch the extremes that others may be in hazard of running into. And if controversy be fairly and meekly managed this way, we may differ, and plead our opinions, and both love and edify them we oppose, and may be loved and edified by them in their opposition.

I know no fear possesseth our side, but that of Arminianism. Let us be fairly secured from that; and as we ever hated true Antinomianism, so we are ready to oppose it with all our might. But having such grounds of jealousy as I have named, (and it is well known that I have not named all), men will allow us to fear, that this noise of Antinomianism is raised, and any advantage they have by the rashness and imprudence of some ignorant men, is improved to a severe height, by some, on purpose to shelter Arminianism in its growth, and to advance it further amongst us; which we pray and hope the Lord will prevent.

Your's,

ROB. TRAILL.

POSTSCRIPT.

THIS paper presented to thee, was in its first design intended as a private letter to a particular brother, as the title bears. How it comes to be published, I shall not trouble the world with an account of. I think, that Dr Owen's excellent book of *justification*, and Mr Marshall's book of the *mystery of sanctification by faith in Jesus Christ*, are such vindications and confirmations of the Protestant doctrine, against which I fear no effectual opposition. Dr Owen's name is so savoury and famous, his soundness in the faith, and ability in learning for its defence, so justly reputed, that no sober man will attempt him. Mr Marshall was a holy retired person; and is only known to the most of us by his book published lately. The book is a deep, practical, well-jointed discourse; and requires a more than ordinary attention in the reading of it with profit. And if it be singly used, I look upon it as one of the most useful books the world hath seen for many years. Its excellency is, that it leads the serious reader directly to Jesus Christ, and cuts the sinews and overturns the foundation of the new divinity, by the same argument of gospel-holiness by which many attempt to overturn the old. And as it hath already the seal of high approbation by many judicious ministers and Christians that have read it; so I fear not but it will stand firm as a rock against all opposition, and will prove good seed, and food, and light and life, to many hereafter.

All my design in publishing this, is, plainly and briefly, to give some information to ordinary plain people, who either want time or judgment to peruse large and learned tractates, about this point of justification, wherein every one is equally concerned.

The theme of justification hath suffered greatly by this, that many have employed their heads and pens, who never had their hearts and consciences exercised about it. And they must be frigid and dreaming speculations that all such are taken up with, whose consciences are not enlivened with heir pe rsonal concern in it.

These things are undoubted: 1. That as it is a point of highest concern to every man, so it is to the whole doctrine of Christianity. All the great fundamentals of Christian truth, center in this of justification. The Trinity of persons in the God-head; the incarnation of the only begotten of the Father; the satisfaction paid to the law and justice of God, for the sins of the world, by his obedience, and sacrifice of himself in that flesh he assumed; and the divine authority of the scriptures, which reveal all this; are all straight lines of truth, that center in this doctrine of the justification of a sinner by the imputation and application of that satisfaction. No justification without a righteousness; no righteousness can be, but what answers fully and perfectly the holy law of God; no such righteousness can be performed, but by a divine person; no benefit can accrue to a sinner by it, unless it be some way his, and applied to him; no application can be made of this, but by faith in Jesus Christ. And as the connection with, and dependence of this truth upon the other great mysteries of divine truth, is evident in the plain proposal of it; so the same hath been sadly manifest in this, that the forsaking of the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ's righteousness, hath been the first step of apostasy in many, who have not stopped till they revolted from Christianity itself. Hence so many Arminians, and their chief leaders too, turned Socinians. From denying justification by Christ's righteousness, they proceeded to the denying of his satisfaction; from the denial of his proper satisfaction, they went on to the denying of the divinity of his person. And that man's charity is excessive that will allow to such blasphemers of the Son of God, the name of *Christians*. Let not then the zeal of any so fundamental a point of truth, as that is of the justification of a sinner by faith in Christ, be charged with folly. It is good to be always zealously affected in a good thing: and this is the best of things.

2. It is undoubted that there is a mystery in this matter of justification. As it is God's act, it is an act of free grace and deep wisdom. Herein justice and mercy kiss one another in saving the sinner. Here appears God-man, with the righteousness of God, and this applied and imputed to sinful

men. Here man's sin and misery, are the field in which the riches of God's grace in Christ are displayed. Here the sinner is made righteous by the righteousness of another, and obtains justification through this righteousness, though he pays and gives nothing for it. God declares him righteous, or justifies him freely; and yet he is well paid for it by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26. It is an act of justice and mercy both, when God justifies a believer on Jesus Christ. And must there not then be a great mystery in it? is not every believer daily admiring the depth of this way of God? This mystery is, usually, rather darkened, than illustrated, by logical terms used in the handling of it. The only defence that good and learned men have for the use of them, is (and it hath great weight), that the craft of adversaries doth constrain them to use such terms, to find them out, or hedge them in. It is certain, that this mystery is as plainly revealed in the word, as the Holy Ghost thought fit to do in teaching the heirs of this grace; and it were well if men did contain themselves within these bounds.

3. It is certain, that this doctrine of justification proposed in the word, hath been very differently understood and expressed by men, that profess that God's word is the only rule of their thoughts and words about the things of the Spirit of God. It hath been, and will be still a stone of stumbling; as our Lord Jesus Christ himself was, and is, Rom. ix. 32, 33. 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8.

4. That whatever variety and differences there be in men's notions and opinions (and there is a great deal) about justification, they are all certainly reducible to two; one of which is every man's opinion. And they are, That the justification of a sinner before God, is either on the account of a righteousness in and of ourselves; or on the account of a righteousness in another, even Jesus Christ, who is *Jehovah our righteousness*. Law and gospel, faith and works, Christ's righteousness and our own, grace and debt, do equally divide all in this matter. Crafty men may endeavour to blend and mix these things together in justification; but it is a vain attempt. It is not only most expressly rejected in the gospel, which peremptorily determines the contrariety, inconsistency,

and incompatibility betwixt these two; but the nature of the things in themselves, and the sense and conscience of every serious person, do witness to the same, that our own righteousness, and Christ's righteousness, do comprehend all the pleas of men to justification (one or other of them every man in the world stands upon); and that they are inconsistent with, and destructive one of another, in justification. If a man trusts to his own righteousness, he rejects Christ's: if he trusts to Christ's righteousness, he rejects his own. If he will not reject his own righteousness, as too good to be renounced; if he will not venture on Christ's righteousness, as not sufficient alone to bear him out, and bring him safe off at God's bar, he is in both a convicted unbeliever. And if he endeavour to patch up a righteousness before God, made up of both, he is still under the law, and a despiser of gospel-grace, Gal. ii. 21. That righteousness that justifies a sinner, consists *in aliquo indivisibili:* and this every man finds when the case is his own, and he serious about it.

5. These different sentiments about justification, have been at all times managed with a special acrimony. They that are for the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ, look upon it as the only foundation of all their hopes for eternity, and therefore cannot but be zealous for it. And the contrary side are as hot for their own righteousness, the most admired and adored Diana of proud mankind, as if it were an image fallen down from Jupiter; when it is indeed the idol that was cast out of heaven with the devil, and which he hath ever since been so diligent to set up before sinful men to be worshipped, that he might bring them into the same condemnation with himself: for by true sin, and false righteousness, he hath *deceived the whole world*, Rev. xii. 9.

6. As the Holy Ghost speaking in the scriptures, is the supreme and infallible judge and determiner of all truth; so where he doth particularly, and on purpose, deliver any truth, there we are specially to attend and learn. And though, in most points of truth, he usually teacheth us by a bare authoritative narration; yet in some points, which his infinite wisdom foresaw special opposition to, he doth not only declare, but debate and determine the truth. And the instances are

two especially. One is about the divinity of Christ's person, and dignity of his priesthood; reasoned, argued, and determined, in the epistle to the Hebrews. The other is about justification by faith; exactly handled in the epistles to the Romans, and to the Galatians. In the former of these two, the doctrine of free justification is taught us most formally and accurately. And though we find no charge against that church, in Paul's time, or in his epistle for their departing from the truth in this point; yet the wisdom of the Holy Ghost is remarkable in this, that this doctrine should be so plainly asserted, and strongly proved, in an epistle to that church, the pretended successors whereof have apostatized from that faith, and proved the main assertors of that damnable error, of justification by works. That to the Galatians is plainly written, to cure a begun, and obviate a full apostasy, from the purity of the gospel, in the point of justification by faith, without the works of the law. And from these two epistles, if we be wise, we must learn the truth of this doctrine, and expound all other scriptures, in a harmony with what is there so setly determined, as *in foro contradictorio.*

7. *Lastly*, It is not to be denied, or concealed, that on each side, some have run into extremes, which the generality do not own, but are usually loaded with. The Papists run high for justification by works; yet even some of them, in the council of Trent, discoursed very favourably of justification by faith. The Arminians have qualified a little the grossness of the Popish doctrine in this article: and some since have essayed to qualify that of the Arminians, and to plead the same cause more finely. Again, some have run into the other extreme, as appeared in Germany a little after the reformation: and some such there have been always, and in all places, where the gospel hath shined; and these were called *Antinomians.* But how unjustly this hateful name is charged upon the orthodox preachers and sincere believers of the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith only, who keep the gospel-midst betwixt these two rocks, is the design of this paper to discover. What we plead for, is in sum, That Jesus Christ our Saviour is *the fountain opened in the house of David, for sin*

and for uncleanness, wherein only men can be washed, in justification and sanctification; and that there is no other fountain of man's devising, nor of God's declaring, for washing a sinner first, so as to make him fit and meet to come to this, to wash, and to be clean.

As for inherent holiness, is it not sufficiently secured by the Spirit of Christ received by faith, the certain spring and cause of it; by the word of God, the plain and perfect rule of it; by the declared necessity of it to all them that look to be saved, and to justify the sincerity of a man's faith; unless we bring it in to justification, and thereby make our own pitiful holiness sit on the throne of judgment, with the precious blood of the Lamb of God?

Though I expect that a more able hand will undertake an examination of the new divinity; yet, to fill up a little room, I would speak somewhat to their Achillean argument, that is so much boasted of, and so frequently insisted on by them, as their shield and spear. Their argument is this: That Christ's righteousness is our legal righteousness; but our own is our evangelical righteousness: that is, When a sinner is charged with sin against the holy law of God, he may oppose Christ's righteousness as his legal defence; but against the charge of the gospel, especially for unbelief, he must produce his faith, as his defence or righteousness, against that charge.

With a great deference to such worthy divines as have looked on this as an argument of weight, I shall, in a few words, essay to manifest, that this is either a saying the same in other odd words, that is commonly taught by us; or a sophism; or a departing from the Protestant doctrine about justification.

1. This argument concerns not at all the justification of a sinner before God. For this end, no more is needful, than to consider, what this charge is, against whom it is given, and by whom. The charge is said to be given in by God; and a charge of unbelief, or disobeying the gospel. But against whom? Is it against a believer or unbeliever? and these two divide all mankind. If it be against a believer, it is a false charge, and can never be given in by the God of truth. For the believer is justified already by faith, and as to this charge

he is innocent. And innocence is defence enough to a man falsely charged, before a righteous judge. Is this charge given in against an unbeliever? We allow it is a righteous charge. Ay, but say they, "Will Christ's righteousness justify a man "from this charge of gospel-unbelief?" The answer is plain. No, it will not; nor yet from any other charge whatsoever, either from law or gospel; for he hath nothing to do with Christ's righteousness while an unbeliever. *What then doth this arguing reprove?* Is it, that no man's faith in Christ's righteousness can be justified in its sincerity before men, and in a man's own conscience, but in and by the fruits of a true lively faith? In this they have no opposers that I know of. Or is it, that a man may have Christ's righteousness for his legal righteousness, and yet be a rebel to the gospel, and a stranger to true holiness? Who ever affirmed it? Or is it, that this gospel-holiness is that that a man must not only have, (for that we grant), but also may venture to stand in, and to be found in before God, and to venture into judgment with God upon, in his claim to eternal life? Then we must oppose them that think so, as we know their own consciences will when in any lively exercise. These plain principles of gospel-truth, while they remain, (and remain they will on their own foundation, when we are all in our graves, and our foolish contentions are buried), do overthrow this pretended charge. 1. That Christ's righteousness is the only plea and answer of a sinner arraigned at God's bar for life and death. 2. This righteousness is imputed to no man but a believer. 3. When it is imputed by grace, and applied by faith, it immediately and eternally becomes the man's righteousness, before God, angels, men, and devils, Rom. viii. 33, 35, 38, 39. It is a righteousness that is never lost, never taken away, never ineffectual; answereth all charges, and is attended with all graces.

2. I would ask, What is that righteousness that justifies a man from the sin of unbelief? We have rejected the imaginary charge; let us now consider the real sin. Unbelief is the greatest sin against both law and gospel; more remotely against the law, which binds all men to believe God speaking, say what he will; more directly against the gospel, which

tells us what we should believe, and commands us to believe. Let us put this case, (and it is pity the case is so rare, when the sin is so common), that a poor soul is troubled about the greatness of the sin of unbelief, in *calling God a liar*, 1 John v. 10. in distrusting his faithful promise, in doubting Christ's ability and good will to save, in standing aloof so long from Jesus Christ; as many of the elect are long in a state of unbelief till called; and the best of believers have unbelief in some measure in them, Mark ix. 24. Abraham's faith staggered sometimes, Gen. xii. and xx. What shall we say to a conscience thus troubled? Will any man dare to tell him, that Christ's righteousness is his legal righteousness against the charge of sins against the law; but for gospel-charges, he must answer them in his own name? I know our hottest opposers would abhor such an answer; and would freely tell such a man, that *the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;* and that his justification from his unbelief must be only in that righteousness which he so sinfully had rejected while in unbelief, and now lays hold on by faith.

3. But some extend this argument yet more dangerously: for they say, That not only men must have their faith for their righteousness against the charge of unbelief, but repentance against the charge of impenitence, sincerity against that of hypocrisy, holiness against that of unholiness, and perseverence as their gospel-righteousness, against the charge of apostacy. If they mean only, that these things are justifications and fruits of true faith, and of the sincerity of the grace of God in us; we do agree to the meaning; but highly dislike the expressions, as unscriptural and dangerous, tending to the dishonouring of the righteousness of Christ, and to run men on the rocks of pride and self-righteousness, that natural corruption drives all men upon. But if they mean, that, either jointly or separately, they are our righteousness before God; or that, either separate from, or mixed with Christ's righteousness, they may be made our claim and plea for salvation; I must say, that it is dangerous doctrine; and its native tendency is, to turn Christ's imputed righteousness out of the church, to destroy all the solid peace of believers, and to exclude gospel-justification out of this world, and reserve it

to another, and that with a horrible uncertainty of any particular man's partaking of it. But these blessed truths of God, and blessings of believers, stand on firmer foundations than heaven or earth, and will continue fixed against all the attempts of the gates of hell. Blessed be the rock, Christ, on which all is built; blessed be the new covenant, *ordered in all things and sure; and blessed is he that believeth; for there shall be a performance of those things which are told him from the Lord*, Luke i. 45. Amen.

LONDON,
Sept. 1, 1692.

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

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THE

WORKS

OF THE LATE REVEREND

ROBERT TRAILL, A. M.

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL IN LONDON.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

CUI VERITAS COMPERTA, SINE DEO? CUI DEUS COGNITUS, SINE CHRISTO? CUI CHRISTUS EXPLORATUS, SINE SPIRITU SANCTO? TERTULLIAN.

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TRAILL'S

WORKS.

VOL. II.

CONTAINING

Sixteen SERMONS on the LORD'S PRAYER, in John xvii. 24.
First printed in 1705.

PREFACE.

THREE things are simply necessary unto any man's aving of true religion and godliness; sound prinples of divine truth known, the savour of that nowledge in the heart, and the power of that saour in a man's worship and walk. There are no ound principles of saving truth, but in and from od's written word. There is no right savour of ose principles, but in and *by faith and love, which in Christ Jesus*, 2 Tim. i. 13. and iii. 15. It is by *is savour of the knowledge of Christ*, as it is called, Cor. ii. 14. that the power of godliness is impressed n the heart, and expressed in the life of a believer. the principles of truth be not from God's word, ere can be no true religion; if the truth professed e consonant to God's word, and faith and love be anting, it may be a man's notion and opinion, but is not the man's religion; and if the power of nown truth be not in his walk and conversation, either should he himself, nor ought any other think, hat such a man hath any religion at all.

They have done good service to the commonealth of learning, who, leaving the unprofitable, eculative, and notional philosophy, have set upon e experimental. And any man may see, that theogy hath been, especially by the school-men, as much rupted; and that it is to be cured by reducing it to practice and experience. For certainly religion sists not so much in the notions of truth in the nd, (in which the devils, the most irreligious of all atures, exceed all men), as in the faith and love truth in the heart, and in the fruits of that faith in life.

There are two sorts of mysteries spoke of in the w Testament: *the mystery of godliness*, which cens in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, 1 Tim. iii. 16.; d *the mystery of iniquity*, which centers in *Antichrist*,

the man of sin, and the son of perdition, 2 Thess. ii. 3, 7. These two mysteries are constant and direct contraries. Whoever is ignorant, or an unbeliever of *the mystery of godliness*, may easily be drawn, or driven, to be a believer of *the mystery of iniquity*. So it was foretold, 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12.; and accordingly we daily see this awful judgment of God executed upon many. Neither is any thing more needful to make a man a real hater of Popery, than to be a sincere believer on Jesus Christ. It is true, that the excessive pride of the Pope, and his prelates, the cruelty of his domination, the frontless profaneness of his synagogue, and the visible worldly craft of his religion, is more than enough to make him and it hateful to Pagans, Jews, Turks, and Infidels. Yet to hate Popery spiritually, as it is a gross corruption of true Christianity, (of which he falsely arrogates the name), is only found with the elect of God: Rev. xiii. 8. *And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him*, (that is, the beast), *whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.* And to the same purpose is that in Rev. xvii. 8.

It was not the clearness of light and knowledge, (in which this age doth much exceed the former), but the power of known truth on the hearts of Christ's witnesses against Antichrist, that carried them so honourably through the fiery trial.

It is unaccountable hypocrisy and folly in such a pretend to be followers of such martyrs for Christ in their cause and testimony, and yet do mock that faith, and love, and communion with God, which were their support in their sufferings for it. If it be possible, it is very rare, and highly improbable, that a stranger too, much more a mocker at the power of godliness, should suffer extremity, and that cheerfully for the form of it.

We have also in these last and perilous times, some antichrists that do deride both *the mystery of godliness* and *the mystery of iniquity*. They have no faith

take up the glory of the *mystery of godliness*; but they have sense and reason enough to take up the folly and knavery of *the mystery of iniquity:* A sort of men, to whom may be applied what *the evil spirit said to the vagabond Jews, exorcists,* Acts xix. 15. *Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?* Which a witty minister took for his text, and raised this, more ingenious than grave, doctrine from it, "That there are "some men so bad, that the devil himself knows "not what to make of them." These men I mean, do not halt betwixt God and Baal, betwixt Christ and Antichrist; but oppose both. If they escape Antichrist's rage in this world, they shall not escape the wrath of the Son of God in the next. They are such as have both heaven and hell against them, and fight against both. But whatever disturbance the church of Christ may meet with, and whatever danger and loss particular men's souls may sustain by other damnable heresies; yet the grand-trial of the New Testament church, and the chief plague of the latter days, is from Antichrist. And no wise Christian can expect the fulfilment of the prophecies of the glory of the church of Christ, but in and by the ruin of Antichrist, and of his throne of iniquity.

And though Antichrist's interest in this nation seems to be pretty well excluded by Protestant laws and rulers, and yet more by the plain interest of the nation, as to all its valuable concerns; yet where *the mystery of godliness* is not duly esteemed, no man nor nation is secured from the malignant influence of *the mystery of iniquity.* And though Antichrist's throne seems to be fixed by long possession, and the blindness of most of the kings in Europe; yet there is that rottenness in its foundations, and that weight of wrath threatened in the word of God, as will sink it, as a millstone in the sea, in due time.

It was with an eye to both these mysteries, that what you read, was preached some years since, and is now published.

It is neither from unacquaintedness with the genius of the present age, nor with my small talent, that I put forth these plain ordinary sermons; I well know, that they are not suited to the spirit of the day.

Nor should any importunity have prevailed (though I was not without some of the nearest and most pressing kind), if I had not some confidence towards God, that his truth is herein declared, (how weakly soever), and some hope that this work may be accepted with God through Jesus Christ, and may be of some use to his people; which I leave with the Lord, who alone giveth the increase.

It was praise-worthy charity in a great divine, now at rest with the Lord, to say, "He hoped that some "were much obliged to the grace of God, to whom "the grace of God was little obliged." To which I would add my desires, that some opposers and perverters of the grace of God, may yet fall under that power of his grace, as shall make them *know the grace of God in truth*, Col. i. 6. and *preach that faith they now seek to destroy*, Gal. i. 23.

The edification and comfort of any believer, or the conviction of any unbeliever, will overpay the labour of this service. This is all I design and desire. I have neither sought patrons nor vouchers, besides the Spirit of God speaking in the scriptures of truth. At this bar all men and all doctrines must stand and be judged.

London, *May* 9, 1705. } ROBERT TRAILL.

SERMONS

CONCERNING THE

LORD'S PRAYER.

SERMON I.

JOHN xvii. 24.

Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

YOU have heard many a good text taken out of the word of God; but though all be good, there is none better than this. Love the text, and love, above all, the blessed first speaker of it; and you will be the fitter to profit by what you hear spoken in his name from it.

The best of all sermons, in chap. xiv, xv, xvi. is concluded with the best of all prayers in this chap. xvii. In this prayer, properly the Lord's prayer, (for that in Matth. vi. 9. is rather the pattern given for our praying, than the Lord's prayer), there are but few petitions, but they are all great ones. He prays, 1. For himself and his own glory, ver. 1, to 6. 2. Then for his people, to the end of this chapter. This ver. 24. contains his last petition for them. And passing the compellation *Father*, five times used in this prayer, thrice singly, as in ver. 1, 5, and 24. twice with an addition, *Holy Father*, ver. 11. *Righteous Father*, ver. 25. I take up two things in this petition.

I. The manner of our Lord's asking, *I will;* a singular way of praying.

II. The matter of Christ's prayer. And in it are four things.

1. The party he prays for; *they whom thou hast given me.* Only Jesus Christ could pray thus for the elect, as elect.

2. The blessing he prays for to them: *that they may be with me where I am.* Where was Christ when he said this? He was going to the garden, to his agony, to be taken that night, and to be crucified next morning, and laid in his grave the next evening. But here our Lord is praying as one in heaven. See ver. 11, 12. *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name.* And he prays to have his people with him in heaven. He loved them so well, that he came to the world where they were; he loved them so well, that he endured what they deserved: and here he expresseth his love in desiring *that they may be with him where he is.* Christ and his people must be together.

3. In the matter of this prayer of Christ, we have the end why Christ prays for this blessing to them; *that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me.* Why would Christ have his people with him where he is? *That they may behold his glory.* Are they to receive no glory of their own? Yes, a great deal, surely; yea, they have got some already, verse 22. *The glory which thou gavest me* (to give), *I have given them;* and a great deal more they are to receive in heaven: but it stands in, and is advanced by their beholding of Christ's glory. Had they not beheld Christ's glory before? John i. 14. *We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,* 2 Cor. iii. 18. *We all with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord.* Isaiah, chap. vi. *saw his glory, and spake of him,* John xii. 41. Why then doth our Lord speak of the necessity of his people's being with him where he is, that they might behold his glory, since he can manifest his glory, and they by grace can behold it, even when they are where they are, and not yet where he is? The reason is this, Because believers now, though by faith they can see something of Christ's glory, yet it is but a very little they do, or can see. The light is small, and their eye but weak; but in that day that our Lord prays for, the discoveries of his glory will be greater, and the seeing eye of the glorified will be stronger, than now we can conceive.

4. In the matter of this prayer, we have the argument on which our Lord prays for this blessing to his people: *For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.* You know, that this phrase, *before the foundation of the world*, is an usual scripture-word for *eternity:* for the foundation of the world and time began together; creatures and time began together. Time is properly the measure of the duration of a creature; but God *inhabiteth eternity*, Isa. lvii. 15. Creatures dwell or sojourn in time. So that this argument of our Lord's is, *For thou lovedst me from eternity.* And it hath a mighty force in it. If our Lord had said, "I pray that they may be with "me where I am, *for thou lovedst them before the foundation of "the world:*" he had spoke what he had oft told them, for they were given to Christ in love. But the argument is stronger, as Christ expresseth it. *For thou lovedst me.* "I love them, "and would have them where I am; they love me, and "would be with me where I am; thou lovest them, and wilt "have them where I am." But here is one argument more, *For thou lovedst* me. Jesus Christ the Son of God, as intrusted with the office of a Saviour, and charged with the chosen, was, and is the object of the Father's eternal delight and love; and on this love the salvation of all the elect stands more firm than the pillars of heaven or earth.

So much for the words of this verse. And from this little glance I have given you of them, you may plainly perceive, that here is a rich and deep mine, better than of gold that perisheth. The Lord help us to dig and find treasure, and to be enriched by it.

HEAD I. To begin with the first thing in the text, *the manner of Christ's praying* here, *I will:* a singular manner: About it I would premise three things:—

1. This is a way manner of praying, that we never read the like of it used by any saint in the word. Some of them have been very familiar with God, and the Lord hath encouraged them much by his condescendence to them; yet nothing of this *I will* is to be heard or read of in their prayers. *I will* is too high for a supplicant at God's footstool. Abraham was a great intimate with God, the first believer honour-

ed with the noble name of *the friend of God;* yet this great friend, when pleading for Sodom, Gen. xviii. with what deep humility is his confidence mixed? Again, when pleading for Ishmael, Gen. xvii. 18. he saith, *O that Ishmael might live in thy sight!* Nothing like this *I will.* Abraham's grandson Jacob came a little nearer to this, Gen. xxxii. 26. *Let me go,* (saith the angel), *for the day breaketh;* Jacob answers, *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me;* "Give me thy blessing, and "go when thou wilt." When he had got the blessing, he got an halting thigh, and a humbled heart whilst he lived, as he hints in Gen. xxxii. 30. *I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.* Not a word or thought of this, "I have "seen God face to face, I have wrestled with him hand to "hand, and I have prevailed." No; he rather wonders that he got alive out of God's hands. Right Jacobs, true Israels, in and on their greatest prevailings with God, and blessings from him, are lowly, humble believers, yea, humbled by God's advancing of them. Moses, that great wrestler with God for Israel, though he expressed a holy resolvedness, yet nothing appears like this *I will.* Exod. xxxii. 10. *Let me alone,* (saith the Lord), *that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them.* It is strange, that one man should as it were hold the Lord's hands, that one man's faith should stop the execution of a just sentence against a sinful people. Surely you may conclude, that the Lord is easy to be entreated. Again, in Exod. xxxiii. 15. Moses said, *If thy presence go not with me* (or *us*), *carry us not up hence.* It is as good for us to die here, as to go any whither without thy presence. The wilderness, though waste and howling; and Canaan, though the glory of all lands, are alike to Moses without God's presence. Again, in Numb. xiv. 12. Moses hath a great offer from the Lord: *I will destroy this people, and make of thee a greater nation, and mightier than they.* Moses, in his zeal to God's glory, refuseth this proffer, and pleads still, and prevails; yet never *I will* is in all his importunity. No believer ever did, or ought to speak so to God; they should all ask according to his will, and forget and deny their own will. Yet Christ did say, *I will,* and might well say so.

2. This *I will* is not in a promise to us, but in a prayer to

his Father. When the Lord promiseth to do, or give good to his people, it is very becoming to use this style, *I will do*, or *give*, or *be* so and so to my people. And it is this *I will* in a promise that faith fixeth on; as Jacob did, Gen. xxxii. 12. *Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good.* But our Lord is here praying; though I own that there is a great promise implied in it, as we shall hear.

3. There is nothing like this in all the account we have of Christ's prayers at other times, and other occasions. We find, that our blessed Saviour was much given to prayer alone. Bless him for it, and love secret prayer the better, that he used it himself, and thereby hallowed it to our use. How our Lord spent those nights in the mountain in prayer, and what he prayed for, and how, we cannot tell, except by that in Heb. v. 7. There are *prayers and supplications offered up, with strong crying and tears.* Believers, you, sometimes when your hearts are full, want to be far from all company, that you may pour out your complaint to the Lord. Blessed Jesus did so in the days of his flesh, and filled the silent night with his crying; and watered the cold earth with his tears, more precious than *the dew of Hermon*, or any moisture (next to his blood) that ever fell on God's earth since the creation. Never were such sinless and precious tears in God's bottle, Psal. lvi. 8. Let yours drop, believers, and mix in the same bottle with his; and on this account sow them in hope, and you shall *reap in joy*, Psal. cxxvi. 5. But for Christ's prayers recorded in the gospel, we find our Lord prayed very humbly, though confidently. When he prays in his agony, not a word of *I will;* but, *Abba, let this cup pass from me, if thou wilt; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.* Christians, behold the amazing difference betwixt Christ's way of praying against his own hell, (so I may call it), and his praying for our heaven. When praying for himself, it is, *Father, if it be thy will, let this cup pass from me.* And no wonder; for every drop in that cup, was wrath, and curse, and death. One drop of it is everlasting poison to all that taste it, but to Jesus the Prince of life. This cup he drank cheerfully; John xviii. 11. *The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?* But when Christ is praying for his people's heaven, it is, *Fa-*

ther, I will that they may be with me where I am. Again, when our Lord is dying on the cross, he prays, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* And again, just at dying, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,* Luke xxii. 34 and 46. All humble supplications; none of them so high and lofty (but yet it well became him) as this *I will.* I own, that Christ, in one instance on the cross, put forth his Divine power, and acted like a King and God, Luke xxiii. 42, 43. One of the malefactors that was crucified with him, (the happiest death ever man had, next to dying for Christ, was to die with the Saviour, and to die receiving Christ's grace, and Christ's pass to heaven), whatever Thomas meant in his words, John xi. 16. *Let us go, that we may die with him;* this happy malefactor had the best of it fulfilled on him: he died with Christ, and got eternal life on the same day. Surely that word was eminently fulfilled in this man, Eccl. vii. 1. *Better is the day of death, than the day of one's birth.* This man prays marvellously, *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.* Our Lord answers more marvellously, *Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.* As if Christ had said, "Can thy faith take me up as a King, and "the disposer of heaven, notwithstanding this thick and dark "vail that is now upon me? I will act as a God and Saviour "to thee:" *To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.* These words have no small aspect on this text, *I will that they be with me where I am.*

Now let us see what may be in this singular word in Christ's prayer, *I will.* No saint ever prayed so; Christ himself in this prayer only here useth this word. There must be some singular things that made our Lord use this word in prayer, *I will;* and them I would look into.

1. We may lawfully conceive, that herein there is a breaking out of his divine glory as the Son of God equal with the Father, as in Phil. ii. 6,—10.; where the apostle marketh three things about Christ, none of which must be forgotten by Christians. (1.) The divine dignity of his person, ver. 6. (2.) The depth of his low and humbled state, ver. 7, 8. (3.) The height of his exalted state, ver. 9, 10, 11. So doth the apostle to the Hebrews, chap. i. 3. Now, though Christ's humb-

ed and exalted state had, and have their several and distinct appearances; yet as his divine dignity was still the same in both states, in his lowest and at his highest, so there were now and then some beamings of his glory, even in his lowest state, John ii. 11.; and in his triumphant entry to Jerusalem, even when he was going to be crucified. So we may think, that this singular word, *I will*, is used by Christ to display his divine glory; for it is a word that no mere man may use.

2. Our Lord had promised it to his disciples in John xiv. 2, 3.; and therefore prays thus for it. And we must think, that the doctrine delivered by Christ in his last sermon of consolation, and this last prayer of his, though in the first place designed for his apostles, yet are the common portion of all believers on Jesus Christ. Now Christ had promised, John xiv. 2, 3. that *where he was, there his people should be also.* If a poor believer have at any time a firm hold on a promise of God, how will he cleave to it, plead upon it, and urge it? as 2 Sam. vii. 27, 28, 29. But who can conceive what confidence of faith Jesus Christ the Son of God had, and did use, in pleading with his Father for the fulfilling of all his own promises to his people? Besides, all Christ's promises to his people were made by him in his Father's name. No wonder then that our Lord says, *I will.*

3. Christ here gives us a copy and pattern of his intercession in heaven, that so much is spoke of. Christ here speaks as within the vail, ver. 4, 11, 12. as if he had done all his work, and were no more in the world. He had done so much, had but a little more to do, which also was speedily to be dispatched. Christ's intercession in heaven, is a kind and powerful remembrance of his people, and of all their concerns, managed with state and majesty; not as a supplicant at the footstool, but as a crowned prince on the throne, at the right hand of the Father. So is it expressed, Rom. viii. 34. Heb. i. 3. viii. 2. x. 12, 13. and xii. 2. This may be one reason of this great *I will.*

4. Here our Lord is making his will; and therefore *I will* is fitly put in. Christ is making his last will and testament, and praying it over to his Father, which is sealed next day with his blood; and here he tells what he wills to his people, even *that they may be with him where he is.* And nothing

greater or better can be willed for them. Blessed for evermore are they that have this willed and bequeathed to them. And you have a word like this in Luke xxii. 29. *I appoint unto you a kingdom:* "I bequeath, dispose it, make it over to "you;" as the word may be rendered.

5. Our Lord had the price of this glory in his hand, ready now to lay down; and therefore he demands the purchase: for Christ was taken this night, and died next day. The price of the redeemed and of their salvation, a price agreed upon in the everlasting covenant, a price of infinite value in itself, a price the Father's wisdom and justice demanded, a price the Son promised to lay down in the fulness of time, a price on the payment whereof so great things were promised to Christ and his seed; this price is now in Christ's hand ready, presently to be told down. No wonder then, if Christ demand the purchase in this high word, *I will*. Believers, it passeth all your thoughts, it passeth the highest flights of your faith, to conceive that high assurance and confidence that our Lord Jesus had of the acceptance and success of that sacrifice of himself that he was now upon offering to his Father. Hence cometh this great *I will*.

6. This *I will* is but an echo to the known will of his Father. It doth not become us to say in our prayers, *I will*, because we do not perfectly know God's will; and when our desires clash with his will, we do but dash against a rock. But Christ knew perfectly, that the thing he prays for, was the will of his Father, John vi. 38, 39, 40. When a believer hath a sure knowledge of God's will, his faith may plead boldly on it. We read of one bold word of blessed Luther. He hearing of the dangerous sickness of an eminent minister of the gospel, prayed for him, prevailed with the Lord for his life; and wrote to him, that he was assured, that the Lord would restore him, and preserve him to outlive Luther; which came to pass. In the close of this letter he writes, *Fiat voluntas mea; mea, Domine, quia tua.* "Let my will be "done; mine, Lord, because thine."

7. *Lastly*, This *I will* in Christ's prayer for his people, shews how much his heart was set upon the eternal happiness of his people. He prays for it with all his heart. On this sweet theme I would offer a few things.

1*st*, Let us consider how Christ's love and will was on the necessary price of their salvation. How dear soever it was to him, whatever it cost him, his love was on laying it down: Luke xii. 50. *I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened* (or *pained*) *till it be accomplished?* and it was a baptism in his own blood; and Luke xxii. 15. *With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:* and it was his last meal. Love to his Father, and love to his sheep, made our Lord long greatly to pay the price of redemption.

There are several thoughts in mens hearts about Christ's dying. 1. Some think of Christ's death as brought about by the wicked hands of sinners. This is a poor thought, if there be no more. This thought is natural to any that read the history of his death. Carnal men may hate Judas that betrayed him, Pilate that condemned him, the priests that cried *Crucify him*, and the people that did it. If this be all, I may say, the devils have a higher thought of Christ's death, and that which comes nearer to the truth, than this sorry one. 2. Some go further, and think of Christ's death as it was a fulfilling of the purpose and word of God concerning him. This Christ teacheth us in Luke xxiv. 26, 44, 46.; and the apostles frequently in their preaching of Christ. 3. There is a higher thought of Christ's death; and that is, That Christ died, by the stroke of God's law and justice, for his people. Justice roused itself against our Lord: Zech. xiii. 7. *Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd.* This sword was drawn and furbished, and did enter into his soul: Isaiah liii. 5. *He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.* Better were it that a man had never heard of Christ and of his death, than to hear, and not to know that his death was for his sins. This is Paul's first doctrine he taught; and he is an ignorant and proud preacher that follows not this pattern: 1 Cor. xv. 3. *For I delivered unto you first of all, that which also I received, that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures.* 4. The best thought of Christ's death is, That he died out of love to his people. Love made him come in the way of justice. Justice and the law saith, as it were, "Thou, or they must die. They have

have behaved better than they did. Grounds of faith, if never so great, yet if not attended with the influence of the Spirit of faith, will never keep faith in life and vigour.

Answ. 2. What reason have you to doubt your interest in this prayer of Christ? You may say, I am so vile and unworthy, that I cannot believe that Christ willed me to be with him. If this be all, it is nothing, yea worse than nothing. 1. Hath not Christ willed eternal glory to many as bad as ever you were? Did he ever will heaven for worthiness in the persons that are to receive it? Is it not always willed to the praise of his own grace and love as the giver, and never as a recompence to the worth and loveliness of the receiver? 2. Christ will mend you ere he bring you to heaven. And a great work it is to *make you meet for it*, Col. i. 12.; a work that must be done, and that he only can do, and he can easily do it. 3. Right preparation for glory, flows from the faith of Christ's good-will to give it. It is a weak and ignorant, but common thought of Christians, that they ought not to look for heaven, nor trust Christ for eternal glory, till they be well advanced in holiness, and meetness for it. But as the first sanctification of our natures flows from our faith and trust in Christ for acceptance, so our farther sanctification and meetness for glory flows from the renewed and repeated exercise of faith on him. The hope of glory is purifying, 1 John iii. 3.

Answ. 3. Every believer hath the witness in himself, that he hath an interest in Christ's heart and will in this prayer: 1 John v. 10. *He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself.* The apostle is speaking of the many witnesses that are given to Jesus Christ as the Saviour. Three in heaven, ver. 7. three on earth, ver. 8. All are divine witnesses, and sufficient grounds of faith in Jesus Christ, ver. 9. Now, saith the apostle, ver. 10. *He that believeth on the Son of God*, (that trusts his soul, and its salvation, to this so well attested Saviour), *he hath the witness* (or *testimony*) *in himself.* 1. There are witnesses in heaven. 2. Witnesses on earth. 3. A testimony in the heart of a believer in Christ. Whoever believeth on Christ, that faith is an evidence sufficient (if he will require it to speak, and will re-

l its testimony, and both of them require actings of
ı) to persuade him, that he hath an interest in Christ's
ver here. On this I would glance at four things, and
clude.

. Believers in Christ, what do you do when you believe?
hat all believers did but know what they do when they
eve! Do ye not, in every distinct act of faith, betrust your
ty perishing soul to the saving arm of Jesus Christ, upon
warrant of all that grace, mercy, and power, that belongs
Christ in his office of a Saviour? And is not this his will,
of eternal glory, a great and glorious beam of that grace
our Lord Jesus Christ, by which ye believe to be saved?
s xv. 11.

. How came you by this your faith? Is it not his gift?
is the *author* of it, Heb. xii. 2. It is *given on Christ's*
lf, Phil. i. 29. Whenever you have an evidence in your
rt, (and it is your own fault if you have it not daily), that
have true faith in Jesus Christ; if it be but weak, and
not mount so high as it ought, raise it by this considera-
, Whence came this spark of faith to be kindled in my
rt? Did it naturally grow in my heart? No. Time was
en I was without it, Eph. ii. 12. and loved to be without
Did Satan plant it? No. I find him to be the great
my of it; and I never felt his enmity, till I began to trust
is Christ; and it is that in me he mainly assaults. Did
isters, and the means of grace, plant faith in me? No.
njoyed them when no faith was wrought in me; and
en it is wrought, all their power, without Christ's grace
Spirit concurring, cannot raise this faith to act and
rcise. Therefore, surely, this faith came from Jesus
ist himself. Was it not from the work, and will, and
of Christ? How easy and native is the inference? If
ı in Christ be the work of his love, how warrantably may
ok, by that faith, for all the good that this love purposeth,
miseth, and prayeth for to me?

. Can you call him to witness with a good conscience,
your great desire and will is to be with Christ in hea-
? If the Lord should try you with this question, "Name
nat one thing that you would have above all?" every

believer hath his answer ready; it is, "Lord, that I may "be ever with thee, where thou art;" as David said, Psalm xxvii. 4. of God's house on earth. This I infer, If thy love be set on being with Christ where he is, be assured that Christ's love is set on the same blessing for thee; yea, thy desire after it, flows from his desire of it for thee.

4. Are you willing, yea pleased and delighted, to hold your title to eternal glory, by the will and testament of Jesus Christ? Are you willing to have and hold the crown by this tenure only, that it was bought by his blood, and willed to you by his testament? Every believer would be in heaven, because Christ is there; and is pleased to get and keep his place there, as willed to him by Jesus Christ. Heaven is a lovely name, and a more lovely thing; but not at all known by many, and but little by the best; but yet believers look for it, and expect it, as *the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord*, Rom. vi. 23. They plead for it as such; at last they receive it as grace, and eternally wear the crown as a crown of grace, as well as a crown of glory. The glorified saint, as soon as he receives this crown, casts it at Christ's feet, Rev. iv. 10. or sets it on Christ's head, as if ashamed to wear a crown, where Christ the only Worthy is. Upon Christ's *head are many crowns*, Rev. xix 12. His Father puts a crown on him, Heb. ii. 9. *crowned him with glory and honour;* his mother, the church, crowns him, Cant. iii. 11. with a crown of salvation; and every saved person puts on Christ's head the crown of the glory of their particular salvation. To conclude: They that are not willing to give the glory of all salvation to Jesus Christ, shall never receive any salvation from him. But for you that are willing to receive all from him, and are delighted to render the glory of all to him, his heart is towards you; his best wishes are for your good; and he will give you what he hath prepared for you, which is exceedingly above all that can be told you.

SERMON II.

JOHN xvii. 24.

Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

THOSE great and saving words of our Lord Jesus Christ, have been taken up into two heads.

1. The manner of Christ's praying: *I will.* Of this last day.

HEAD II. *The matter of Christ's prayer.* And therein I took up four things, 1. The persons he prays for; *they whom thou hast given me.* 2. The blessing he prays for to them; *that they may be with me where I am.* 3. The end our Lord prays for this blessing to them for; *that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me.* 4. The argument our Lord presseth this suit by; *for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.*

The *first* of these I would now speak to: *The designation and name of the persons Christ here prays for; They whom thou hast given me.* No man but Jesus Christ, who is more than a man, dare say in prayer, *I will;* nor pray for persons under this name as Christ did. All our prayers are to be out of one book; and we pray without book in a bad sense, when we go beyond it. The only book I mean, is God's written will in the holy scriptures. By this we are taught what to pray for, and how we should pray; and beyond this we cannot lawfully ask any thing; neither need we more for direction, but only the same Spirit that writ them, to assist us in the using of them, Rom. viii. 26.; that we may *pray in the Holy Ghost*, Jude, ver. 20. and *in the Spirit*, Eph. vi. 18. But our Lord Jesus Christ could not only pray out of God's revealed will in the scriptures, (for he testified of the scriptures, as they do of him, John v. 39.); but he could, and did pray out of

the book of God's secret will. He prayed out of the book of life, and was acquainted with the original of the covenant. And thus he prays here for *them that were given him.*

From this I would raise three doctrines, and speak to one of them at this time.

Obs. 1. *There is a select company of the children of men given by the Father to the Son.*

Obs. 2. *This company given by the Father to the Son was, and is fully and exactly known by Jesus Christ.*

Obs. 3. *That Jesus Christ is nearly concerned about their eternal salvation;* as his praying for it here witnesseth.

Obs. 1. *There was a select company of mankind given by the Father to his Son Jesus Christ, to be saved by him.*

This truth is several ways declared to us in the word; and yet more by Jesus Christ himself, than by any other; and yet more in this prayer, than any where else by him. And, if we may so conceive, this great depth of God was specially fit to mentioned, when the receiver of them is speaking his heart about them to the giver of them. This is named six times in this short chapter. In ver. 2. *As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.* In ver. 6. we have it twice: *I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.* In verse 9. *I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine.* Ver. 11. *Holy Father, keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me.* And here again in ver. 24. *They whom thou hast given me.* There is a twofold giving of men to the Son by the Father. One is eternal, in the purpose of his grace; and this is mainly meant here. The other is in time; when the Father by his Spirit draws men to Christ, John vi. 44, 45. All the elect are given from eternity to the Son, to be redeemed by his blood; all the redeemed are in due time drawn by the Father to the Son, to be kept to eternal life.

On this giving of men to Christ, I would speak a little.

I. To the nature of it. And,
II. To the ends of it.

I. As to *the nature of it.* This giving of men to the Son to redeemed and saved, is the same thing with election and destination, Eph. i. 4. *He hath chosen us in Christ before the ndation of the world.* Ver. 5. *Having predestinated us unto adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself.* And ver. 11. *whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated ording to the purpose of him who worketh all things after counsel of his own will.* The difference betwixt these rds is very small. *Election* points at the distinction of the sons on whom this grace fell from eternity. *Predestina-* fixeth the end they were appointed to, 1 Thess. v. 9. ving them to Christ, points forth the grand trustee with this at charge. The meaning of this word, *giving of men to rist*, so oft used by our Lord, and hallowed by his using of hath these five things in it:—

1. That there were divine transactions between the Father l Son about the saving of men. There was *a counsel of ce between them both*, Zech. vi. 13.; oft and plainly reveal- in the word, yet a mystery unsearchable to all men, but nly to be believed, reverently to be adored, and cautiously be improved by us.

2. That there was but a select company of mankind that s counsel was about. Our Lord, who knew them best, l speaks thus of them, especially in this prayer; as hath en declared. He still speaks of them by way of distinction m the world. Whatever men may say of universal re- nption, surely universal election is a contradiction in words. ction must be of a fixed determinate number. There is election, if there be no passing by. If all be taken, there none chosen. If there be an *election*, there is a *rest*, a *nant* (and this rest is a multitude), Rom. xi. 7. How at this number of the elect is, Christ and his Father knew; l the last day will declare, when they shall be brought all to- her, and obtain *the kingdom prepared for them from the foun- ion of the world*, and be adjudged to it by Christ, as they are *blessed of his Father*, Matth. xxv. 34.

3. That this counsel about their salvation was from eternity. Time-election is as great a blunder as universal election. How oft is the eternity of it asserted in the word? Eph. i. 4. 2 Thess. ii. 13. 2 Tim. i. 9. Election is an immanent act of God about creatures; not on them, nor with them. It is in a transaction betwixt the Father and the Son, about men that were not, but were only to be; and to reap the benefit of it in time and to eternity.

4. It follows, that this grace of election must be unchangeable, immutable, and unalterable. It never changeth, it never fails of its designed effect. All God's counsels are so: Isa. xxv. 1. *Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.* His *counsel stands for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations,* Psal. xxxiii. 11. *He is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doth. For he performeth the thing which is appointed for me,* Job xxiii. 13, 14. Now, of this number of the elect given by the Father to the Son, there is no paring from it, no adding to it. The book of life admits of no corrections, blotting out; no additions, no new editions.

5. It is also implied, that in this giving of men to the Son, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, hath a special interest. Thereby they are made his charge; and he *the Captain of their salvation, to bring these sons* of election-grace *to eternal glory,* Heb. ii. 10.

II. Of *the ends of this giving of men thus to Christ by the Father.* It is a glorious act of God, and it is on glorious designs and ends. Of some of these, from the word, I would speak in these four particulars:—

1. Herein is a most clear displaying of absolute sovereignty in Jehovah. The glorious God is most zealous for the glory of this name of his sovereignty, as what most nearly concerns the glory of his Godhead; and proud vain men are most averse to the owning of it. The apostle Paul is on this same doctrine in Rom. ix. and builds it on this same foundation, ver. 11,—19. He starts two strong objections against it; as carnal minds are fertile in vain arguings against divine counsels. And O that all advocates for them had been satisfied with

Paul's answers, which are the only and strongest bulwarks of the Holy Ghost about this doctrine! *Object.* 1. is in ver. 14. *Is there unrighteousness with God?* Did God love Jacob, and hate Esau, before they had either done good or evil? ver. 11, 12, 13. Where is the righteousness of this? Jacob had done no good to deserve love; Esau had done no evil to deserve hatred. How does the apostle answer it? 1. By an abhorrence of the charge: *God forbid.* If we cannot see into the depth of God's counsels, let us still justify God, as Jer. xii. 1.; and admire and adore the depth we cannot fathom, Rom. xi. 33. 2. He answers with a reason taken from God's old saying to Moses, ver. 15. Now, if Paul had been of some mens mind, he would have answered, That God foresaw, that though Jacob had done no good when he was in the womb, yet that in time he would be a holy man, a wrestler with God, and a great believer; and therefore God loved him, and therefore there was no unrighteousness with God. And so as to Esau, he would have said, God foresaw that he would prove a profane man, would sell his birth-right for a mess of pottage, grieve the hearts of his godly father and mother by his marriage, and hate to the death his godly brother Jacob; and therefore God hated Esau, and therefore there was no unrighteousness with God. But Paul, instead of hinting any thing like this, gives an answer inconsistent with, and subversive of this notion. In ver. 15. *For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.* See the apostle's inference from, and application of this word of God, ver. 16. *So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.* And on the case of reprobate Pharaoh, ver. 17. he again infers, ver. 18. *Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy; and whom he will, he hardeneth.* He plainly layeth the sovereign will and pleasure of God, as the fixed foundation of the counsels of God about men's eternal state. *Object.* 2. In ver. 19. *Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?* A plausible strong-like objection, in every natural man's heart. How doth he answer it? ver. 20. *Nay, but, O man, who art thou that re*

had the power of death, that is, the devil, Heb. ii. 14. He must be *made under the law, that he may redeem them that were under the law*, Gal. iv. 4, 5. He *redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*, Gal. iii. 13. He must *make an entrance to the holiest of all for us, by his blood*; he must *consecrate the way for us by his flesh*, Heb. x. 19, 20. He must *enter into the holy place by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us*, Heb. ix. 12. Thus, by our Lord Jesus Christ, all the gates of hell are shut on the elect, and none can open them; and all the gates of heaven are opened, and none can shut them on them that are given him.

3. All the parts and pieces of salvation are in Christ's hand, and do come to us by him. The *acceptance of our persons*, is in and through this beloved, Eph. i. 6. The *forgiveness of our sins* is through his blood, Eph. i. 7. Our *quickening, when dead in sins, our rising, and sitting in heavenly places*, is with Christ and in him, Eph. ii. 4, 5, 6. Our title and right to heaven is singly owing to him. What right hath a sinner to heaven? No more, and no other, than he hath to Jesus Christ. If he be united to Christ by faith in him, he is an heir of God, an heir of glory, and a joint heir with Christ, Rom. viii. 17. Nay, our sanctification, which is begun glory, 2 Cor. iii. 18. is but a beam of this Sun of Righteousness darted in upon our souls. Unless Christ had been made sanctification to us, there had never been a sanctified man or woman in the world.

4. The actual possession of the kingdom is owing to Jesus Christ. We have a right to it in him; our charter for it is sealed by his blood; we have the earnest of it by his Spirit; we are kept to it, and it kept for us, by his power; and at last we receive it out of his own hand, John x. 28. *I give unto them eternal life.* It is too great, and too good a gift, to be given by any but blessed Jesus.

I would conclude with a few words of APPLICATION.

1. Learn to see with wonder and adoration the high spring of the well of life and salvation for poor men. It is in the Father's giving of men to the Son. Nothing is before it, and all the blessings of grace and glory flow from it. From hence is the creating of the world, that these men might be born

in it; from hence came the permitting and ordering of Adam's fall, that the Redeemer might be needful; from this Christ comes into the world, to redeem them; from this comes the gospel, as a light to seek those lost ones; from this cometh the Spirit, to make the gospel effectual, that *they who are ordained to eternal life, may believe*, Acts xiii. 48.

2. Labour to see your own concern in this giving to the Son. It is but a deep and dangerous speculation without this care. Many poor questions are in people's heads, and many poor ways of answering them are in men's hearts. Some would fain know if they have any grace and true holiness; others go farther, and they would fain know if they have faith, the spring of holiness; some would fain know their title and right to heaven. There is an allowed room and place for these inquiries, and the like. But how few, even of true Christians, ask this question, *Was I given by the Father to the Son?* It is a question that may be made, and may be answered to satisfaction. Christ tells his disciples it, Luke x. 20. Paul knew it, 1 Thess. v. 9. Peter bids us *give diligence to make our calling and election sure*, 2 Pet. i. 10. But because there is some difficulty and danger in managing this inquiry, I would offer a few things about it.

Advice 1. Lay it down as a fixed persuasion in your heart, that satisfaction in this matter would be of great advantage to your souls. 1. This would bring you to the top of the mount. As Moses on the top of Pisgah saw the earthly Canaan; so you, from the sight of your election-grace, may find it both an easy and a comfortable thing, to view all the streams of grace and mercy towards you. You would then see whence they spring, and whither they run. 2. This sight would keep you low and humble. The most humbling thought is this, "I was of mere sovereign grace given by the Father "to the Son." A false pretender to this blessing may be proud; but the true believer of it is always humbled by it. Whence is it that there is so much pride amongst Christians? why are they puffed up so soon and so much? Is it not always on the account of what they do, are, or receive? Here is a blessing, where none of those puffing-up things are; a blessing that hath no sort of respect to what we are, have, or do.

3. The knowledge of this blessing of electing love, is of great use in extreme trials. We are called to lay our account with them; the Lord brings them on us; and we need all the armour of God against them, Eph. vi. 10.; and *the hope of salvation* is *a helmet* in the evil day, 1 Thess. v. 8, 9. And this knowledge that we are *appointed to salvation*, is the ground of this hope. Christ comforts the hearts of his people with this, Luke xii. 32. *Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* Christ tells Ananias, that Paul was *a chosen vessel*, who was to do and suffer much for his name, Acts ix. 15, 16.; Ananias tells it Paul; and Paul repeats it, in the midst of his sufferings, in a great assembly, Acts xxii. 14, 15.

Advice 2. For as great advantages as this knowledge hath in it, think not, attempt not the attaining of it by a sudden leap; but you must ascend to it by degrees. It was a good saying, I think, of the blessed martyr Mr Bradford, "No "man should go to the university of predestination, till he be "well trained up in the grammar-school of faith and repen-"tance." If this, or the like method, be neglected, no good can, but much hurt will ensue. God's decrees are some way like the mount that must not be touched; but you must first worship at a distance, and then make a reverend and awful approach. This is not only holy ground, but it is unsearchable by us. Now know, that though electing love hath no cause nor ground for it without God himself, yet it hath great and noble fruits; and in the decree of the end, salvation, there is a wise design of fit means and ways to compass this end: 2 Thess. ii. 13. *But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through the sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth*; and 1 Pet. i. 2. *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.* There is a *work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope*, whereby *the election of God* may be *known*, 1 Thess. i. 3, 4. You must not leap immediately up to the purpose of God, but climb up thereto by the steps he hath prescribed in his revealed will.

Advice 3. You must be at great pains about this. This knowledge of your own concern in this giving to the Son, is not easily acquired; wherefore the apostle saith, 2 Pet. i. 10. *Give diligence* (and verse 5. *Give all diligence*) *to make your calling and election sure.* God's part in your calling and election is sure enough; and needs none of your labour to make it surer. But to make it sure to yourselves, and to make the knowledge thereof sure and clear to you, diligence is needful, and diligence will do it. Alas! who bestow any diligence about this greatest concern? Search out the fruits and marks of election: and when you find any of them, then, and not before, climb up this high tree of the Father's giving you to Jesus Christ.

Advice 4. Be not discouraged if it doth not yet appear to you, that you were given by the Father to the Son. It may be, though you do not see it. Many of the given do not for a long time know it; yea, I see no great danger in saying, that not a few of the given to the Son may be in darkness, and doubts, and fears about it, till the last and brightest day declare it, and till the last sentence proclaims it, *Come, ye blessed of my Father,* (blessed by this giving), *inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,* Matth. xxv. 34. It is wisely ordered by the Lord, that all that are given to the Son, do not (though they should endeavour it) know that they were given; and that they that are not given, cannot know it; that the book of life is not always legible to all believers, and that the book of death cannot be read by any unbeliever. It would be a miserable world, if the reprobate could be as sure of their being past by, as the elect may be of their being chosen to salvation. If therefore any of you be in the dark about your own election, be not discouraged; it may be, though you do not know it. And to such discouraged souls I would speak a few words.

Object. It may be some of you may say, that this is strange doctrine.

Ans. I am sorry that this doctrine is so rarely taught; and I am sure, that it is not only the doctrine of Christ, and of his apostles; but that the work of the gospel in conversion of sinners, and in the edification, growth, and holiness of saints,

did prosper more, when such doctrine was more commonly taught than now. Discouraged souls about this doctrine, answer these :—

1. Can you hear of this giving of some by the Father to the Son, and bless the giver, the Father; and the receiver, the Son; and count all the given a happy remnant? A heart grumbling and replying against this sovereign grace of God, I dare not say is a sure token of one not given, but it is surely a very bad thing. But, on the contrary, it is a hopeful sign of an interest in this great blessing, when a poor creature, in his deepest distress and fears about his own salvation, hath a high value for electing love, and reckons them blessed indeed that are sharers thereof. He admires and adores this design, even when doubtful of his own interest therein.

2. Can you be sure that you were not given to the Son? No, surely. God hath not, will not reveal it. Thy heart is blind and deceitful; do not trust it. Satan knows it not, and is a lyar, especially he pretends to teach thee God's secret purposes. The devil was never on God's counsel; why should you regard his whispers? He is a reprobate, condemned spirit, raging against God, and strives to infuse his own spirit and temper into sinners. Say then, "If I know not "that I was given to the Son, I cannot know, I should not "conclude, none can prove, that I was not given to him."

3. Is Christ as God's gift precious to you? 1 Pet. ii. 6, 7, 8. Then it is sure you were given to Christ. It is a deep secret, who are given by the Father to the Son; but it is an open plain truth, that *the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world*, 1 John iv. 14. How do you like him; how do you esteem and love him? Say then, "Although I am "not sure that I was given to Christ, I am sure that Christ is "come as a Saviour, just such a one as I need."

4. Can you give yourselves to Jesus Christ to be saved by him? Then were you given to him, to be redeemed by him. Your faith on him, speaks your election in him. True faith is *the faith of God's elect*, Tit. i. 1. Why so called, but because all, and only God's elect, get it, and have it; and because election may be known by it; because faith flows from electing love, and should lead the believer up to this love as its ori-

ginal and spring? Answer then, thou that knows not that thou wast given to Christ by the Father, dost thou give thyself to Christ? Seest thou no hand in heaven nor earth, to intrust thy soul in, but Christ's? Hast thou so seen him in his skill and good-will to save lost sinners, that thou hast, daily dost, and resolvest still to bring, and lay, and leave thy perishing soul on Jesus Christ, as on him that *speaketh in righteousness, mighty to save?* Isa. lxiii. 1. Then thou wast given to Jesus Christ. Go on in trusting him, and in living by faith on him; and he will make you know, that *he loved you, and gave himself for you,* Gal. ii. 20. And if thou knowest that he gave himself for thee in time, conclude, that thou wast given to him by the Father from eternity, and that thou shalt to eternity be with him where he is.

SERMON III.

JOHN xvii. 24.

Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

PETER gives a good testimony to Jesus Christ, in John vi. 68. *Thou hast the words of eternal life.* And here these words are eminently. Christ himself is *eternal life,* 1 John i. 2. And in this text we have him that was and is essential, eternal life, praying for and willing of communicated eternal life to all his people.

The first thing I took up in the matter of Christ's prayer in this verse, was the name and description of them he prays for; *they whom thou hast given me.* From this part of the verse I named three doctrines.

1. *That there was a select company of mankind given by the Father to the Son, to be redeemed and saved.* On this I spoke last day.

Observ. 2. *This company given to Christ, are best known to him.* Christ knows them all, particularly, fully, exactly. Christ doth not here pray, as we ought, for the elect, on the general truth revealed in the word, that there is a body of the elect, though we know not who they be; but Christ hath them all now as in his eye and heart particularly. Paul was in his eye, and all that were to believe on him through grace. Why are we commanded to pray for all men, though Christ did not, John xvii. 9, 10.? Because we know not particularly who are the elect, but Christ did.

On this truth I would offer a few things in proof of it, and then apply it. For this doctrine looks like a deep and barren point; yet it is profitable.

1. For proof of this, *that the elect are known to Jesus Christ.* Let us see what he himself speaks of it, John x. Once in that parable, ver. 3. *He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.* You will never believe, till Christ call you by name. Again, in the doctrine taught by him on the parable, ver. 14. *I am the good Shepherd,* (O how well doth it become Christ to commend himself! You will never love him, till Christ himself commend himself to you), *and know my sheep.* And ver. 27. *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.* Ver. 28. *And I give unto them eternal life.* Well doth Christ know to whom he gives eternal life. Woe to them to whom he will say, *I never knew you,* Matt. vii. 23. Little better is that word in John x. 26. *But ye believe not; because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.* Christ knew who were his sheep, and who not; who were gathered into his fold, and who were yet straying as lost sheep on the mountains: verse 16. *And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice.* The grounds of this truth are,

1*st*, Christ, as God, knoweth all things, and therefore knows who are given to him. It is a pity, that when the Godhead of the Son shines so very brightly in the New Testament, any should doubt and deny it. And it is pity also, that the deniers of this rock of the church of Christ should not renounce the name of Christians; or that any true Christian should af-

ford this honourable name to such apostates. Peter, when asked by his Master about his love to him, John xxi. 17. answers by a humble appeal to his all-knowing. He that knows all things, must know who were given him by the Father.

2dly, The Son of God was a party concerned in this transaction. As the Father was the giver of the elect, the Son was the receiver of them. Will any say, that the Father knew not whom he gave, when his foreknowledge is so expressly told in Rom. viii. 29.? It is equally absurd to say, that the Son knew not whom he received. And as the Father's giving was of particular, distinct, and distinguished persons; so was the Son's receiving of such persons. Hence our Lord says of them in his prayer, ver. 9, 10. *I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them.* This transaction betwixt the Father and Son, was a business, as of high sovereignty about mankind, and of infinite love to the given, so was it passed in infinite wisdom. *The manifold wisdom of God* is in this *eternal purpose which he purchased in Christ Jesus our Lord*, Eph. iii. 9, 10, 11. It is a high reflection on all the glory of God in this transaction, to say, that the Father knew not particularly whom he gave to the Son, or that the Son knew not who were given to him.

3dly, Christ's knowing who were given to him, is the ground of his undertaking and dispatching the work of redemption. This work he undertook in love; this love is still acted on persons, Gal. ii. 20. Rev. i. 5. These persons must be known to Christ, if so beloved by him.

4thly, It is this knowledge in Christ that is the ground of Christ's patience and pains on the elect. If any will say, that Christ, in dying, designed no more for Peter than for Judas, (God forgive them, and open their eyes); I hope they will not say, but Christ did more for Peter than for Judas. The visible difference that is betwixt Christ's way of dealing with men, flows from his knowing of them that are given to him. There are some that Christ deals with in and by the gospel; and, upon their first refusal, he leaves them, and

Christ and they never meet till the last day: others, he waits long upon, and yet he leaves them at last. But there are some that Christ deals with; and though they refuse him again and again, yet he will never leave them, till he hath gained their hearts, and saved them. Paul thought that he was the rafest instance of this, 1 Tim. i. 16. *Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first* (*in me the chief* sinner) *Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.* Yet we may say, that there are some in heaven, and some on earth, that have been as great patterns as Paul; though they were not so filled with the Holy Ghost as he; nor Christ's grace in calling them set so on a candlestick for all ages, as it was in his case. It may be Paul never heard Christ preach, nor saw his face, though he was brought up at Jerusalem in Christ's time, Acts xxii. 3. and xxvi. 4. It is like he heard no more of him, but by the common report, and by the slanders of the Pharisees, Christ's constant enemies. It was but blind zeal of the law that locked him up in unbelief, and made him hate Christ's name and people. But how many have been since Paul, that have lived long under the light of the gospel, whom the Lord hath striven long with, and they have as long striven against him, whom yet he hath subdued at last? Blessed be his name; and may such instances be multiplied to his praise. This way is taken by Christ with some, according to his charge from his Father, John vi. 39. *And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.*

5thly, This knowing of them who are given to him, is the ground of the confidence of Christ as Mediator, as to the success of his work; both of his work of redemption of them by his blood, and of the work of his Spirit, in applying it to the souls and consciences of the redeemed. So he proclaims it, John vi. 37. *All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me.* "I am sure, would he say, of every one of them, sooner or "later." As long as there is one given, not yet come to Christ, there is one yet to believe on him. Christ might

well promise this to himself; for the Father had promised it, Isa. liii. 10, 11. *He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.* The latter part of John vi. 37. is Christ's promise to us, *Him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out.* Why do none but the given come to Christ? Because none can come unless they be drawn by the Father, John vi. 44, 45. Behold this blessed order. The Father gives the elect to his Son, to be redeemed; the Son, in love, lays down his life for them, and redeems them. The Father draws them to Christ, and makes them believers; Christ receives them as given, redeemed, and drawn; and thus are they saved. Christ knows them well, and therefore welcomes them.

Application. 1. This truth, That Christ knows all that are given to him, should feed and strengthen our faith, as to all the elect. Christ knows them; therefore they shall be saved. The apostle, 2 Tim. ii. 18, 19. brings in this as a ground of faith, even when damnable errors creep in, and *overthrow the faith of some: Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.* The Lord-giver knows who are his, and whom he gives; and the Lord-receiver knows who are his, and whom he receives. The Lord knows better who are his, than the devil knows who are his, for many that the devil had as his (as all natural men are, Eph. ii. 2, 3.), and thought he was sure of as his, have been rescued by the Lord. But never did the devil prevail fully against any that are Christ's. It is a happy parenthesis in Matth. xxiv. 24. when our Lord is warning of dangerous times, by false christs, and of their great success in deceiving, he saith, that *they shall deceive (if it were possible) the very elect.* But it is impossible, because they are elect. There are two cases of the elect that this truth should strengthen our faith in. 1. As to the uncalled elect. Many of them are yet uncalled, and lying in the common pit of nature; but they shall be called. The gospel will be taken away from that place where none such are. All God's pains

in the gospel are taken *for the elect's sakes*, as Paul's pains were, 2 Tim. ii. 10. The Lord encouraged Paul to stay and labour in Corinth, by this argument, *For I have much people in this city*, Acts xviii. 9, 10. Some are converted already, and many more are to be converted. 2. In case of backsliding and apostasy: a sad, but no very rare case. Some that have given great witness of the truth of the grace of God in them, have, through the power of corruption, the prevalency of temptation, and the Lord's leaving of them, fallen foully, and lain long. Yet, if they be Christ's, his mark is on them, and they shall be recovered.

2. Believers, from this truth, have ground of strong consolation, both in praising and in praying: Heb. vi. 17, 18. The *immutability of his counsel* is declared, *that we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us.* Have you fled for refuge to Jesus Christ? Do you know it? Hath the Lord revealed it to you, that you have sought your only refuge in the shadow of Christ's wings? Then how should you rejoice and give thanks for your election? Thus the apostle did usually, Eph. i. 3, 4. 2 Thess. ii. 13. I dare not say, that no believer can be heartily thankful for Christ's grace, before he fully and surely know its highest spring: but I am sure that that believer praiseth best, that knows best that he was given to the Son. The receivings of the glorified will be the greatest; their praises will be the highest; and their knowledge of eternal love as the spring of all their grace and glory, will be the clearest. And as this doth raise praise, so doth it raise mighty prayer. Our Lord prays for his people under this name, *Thine and mine*, John xvii. 9, 10. David prays for himself, under this name, Psal. cxix. 94. *I am thine, save me.* The clearer your knowledge be of your interest in God, and in his love, the more mighty will your pleadings with him be.

And so much for the second point.

Observ. 3. *Christ's heart is set on the bliss of all that the Father hath given to him.* And this he expresseth in this desire.

On this point, I would, I. Give some proofs of this truth. II. Show whence this heart-concern for their bliss doth flow.

I. *Proofs of this truth, That Christ's heart is set on the bliss and eternal salvation of his people*, are these five:—

1. Christ's covenanting for them proves this. In that day (if a day may be talked of in eternity; but we are time-creatures, and have no fit words for eternity) when this blessed company were given by the Father to the Son, the Son did undertake to do all things needful to be done, to bring them to eternal glory. He undertook and promised to take on him their nature; and in that nature to bear their sins; and, by the sacrifice of that nature for their sins, to make an expiation of their sins. In a word, he promised to do all he was required to do, and he did all he promised to the Father, for the salvation of his people. Whenever we look to this treaty, we must gather, Surely the Son of God had a great mind to the happiness of his people.

2. Christ's cheerful laying down his life for their redemption, proves how his heart was set on their salvation. It was his errand in coming into the world: John x. 10. *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* Believers get a greater, higher, and more noble life by the second Adam, than they lost by the first Adam. This is the meaning of that *much more* twice mentioned by the apostle when comparing these two heads, Rom. v. 15, 17. But how doth Christ give, and his people receive this life? Even by his death. He *laid down his life for his sheep*, John x. 11, 15. *Therefore his Father loved him*, ver. 17. And thereby he proved his love to the salvation of his people, John xv. 13.

3. He proves his love to their salvation, by his sealing and confirming the covenant, the charter of their salvation, with his own blood. Compare Gal. iii. 15, 16, 17. with Heb. ix. 15, 16, 17. It is called *the blood of the everlasting covenant*, Heb. xiii. 20. Christ's blood was not only redeeming and purchasing blood, a just and full price both for the heirs and for the inheritance; but it was sealing blood, and confirming of that covenant, in and by which the inheritance was secured to the heirs, and the heirs secured for the inheritance. Alas! many have the Bible, and use it but little; and many use it amiss, because they know not its right name. It is well and warrantably, from its contents, called, in its title page, in all

languages, and translations, *The Old and New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* But how few, in reading this title, mind the use and virtue of the blood of Jesus, which turned the covenant of God's grace into the testament of Christ, and thereby sealed and confirmed all the good words and good things in that covenant? it was a happy word we find in the *Book of Martyrs*, that some in the dawning of the light of the gospel in this land, near two hundred years ago, used, in calling the New Testament (a great rarity in those days) *The blood of Christ.* You never rightly read the gospel, nor do you understand the design of it, nor rightly believe one promise in it, till in heart you can say, "This gospel is the only charter "of my salvation, sealed with the blood of my only Saviour." If any be for another Saviour than Christ, and for another security and charter for salvation than his thus sealed testament, on their eternal peril be it. Let them try, and perish. For, as God is true, perish they shall, even all that take that course, Acts iv. 12.

4. Christ proves his love to his people's salvation by his intercession for them. Of which this chapter is a great instance, And whereof we have so much spoke in Rom. viii. 34. Heb. vii. 25. and ix. 24. and 1 John ii. 1. This is his business in heaven. By this he *prepares their place for them*, John xiv. 2, 3.; and on it assures them of their possessing of it.

5. Christ gives his Spirit to his people, to prove his concern about their salvation. And we may allude to Isa. v. 4. *What could have been done more?* He covenanted with the Father from eternity about their salvation. He bought it for them, and them for it, in the fulness of time. The day of Christ's redeeming his people, was the flower of time, the greatest and noblest thing done since God set the clock of time a-going; for his glorious return is to be at the end of time. He turned the covenant of their salvation into a testament by his blood; and did in that testament leave all the grace and glory bought by his blood as a legacy to his people. He, when he had done this, went to heaven with his blood, Heb. ix. 12. that it might speak before God, Heb. xii. 24. for all blessings to his people. And till they get full possession of glory, he gives to them his Spirit. All that are his

have his Spirit, as surely as it is, that *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*, Rom. viii. 9, 15. Gal. iv. 6. This gift of the Spirit is a marvellous gift. None can know it, but they that receive it: John xiv. 17.: *The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.* 1 John iv. 13. *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.* This gift is always given in mere love and grace, and is a sure proof of God's special love. This gift of the Spirit is an earnest of heaven, 2 Cor. i. 22. God *hath sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts;* and 2 Cor. v. 5. And Eph. i. 13, 14. he is called *that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.* He is called *the first-fruits of the Spirit*, Rom. viii. 23. This gift is an enriching gift. How great things doth he in and on the man! How much good doth he bring along with himself! He reveals Christ to the soul, John xvi. 14, 15.; draws the soul to Christ, unites him with Christ; dwells in the believer, and *seals him to the day of redemption*, Ephesians iv. 30.; comforts him till that day comes. Hence called the *Comforter* by our Lord, John xiv. 16, 26. xv. 26. and xvi. 7. Yet for all the richness of this gift of the Spirit, this you must know, that as soon as a man receives this gift, he sees and finds himself to be a poor, empty, and needy creature. When this eye-salve of Christ anoints a man's eyes, then he seeth what he did not before; that he is *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*, Rev. iii. 17, 18. Therefore is the Spirit of Christ in believers *a Spirit of grace and of supplication*, Zech. xiii. 10.; *a Spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father*, Rom. viii. 15. and Galatians iv. 6. If *no man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost*, 1 Cor. xii. 3.; surely no man can call the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *Abba, Father*, but by the Holy Ghost. The first word of the new creature is *Abba*. But many believers live long ere they can say *Abba* confidently. They do not consider duly, that as this relation is granted by the Lord; so it should be pleaded by believers,

without any regard to worth in us, but only to his own free grace and love in Jesus Christ. The Spirit of Christ in believers is a Spirit of prayer, a Spirit of begging in a child at its heavenly Father's door. The believer finds manifold daily wants; he knows none can relieve and supply his wants, but his *God by Jesus Christ*, Phil. iv. 19. He hath an instinct, and some ability by the Spirit to beg and wait. The operation of the Spirit in believers, the communion of the Holy Ghost, is a great mystery. He works more on them, than they feel and know; and they feel more than they can express in words; and they express more than any that have not received *the same Spirit of faith* (2 Cor. iv. 13.) can understand. But this we know, that whensoever the Spirit of Christ applies his grace and power to the heart of a sinner, there is something wrought that day, that shall last to eternity. There is, by that finger of God, that impression made upon the soul, and that mark left upon it, that shall never wear out, and that sin and Satan shall never be able to blot out again; but it shall remain, and grow, and be seen at the coming of Christ at the last day, Phil. i. 6.

II. *Why is Christ's heart so set upon his people's glory in heaven?*

1. Because of his near interest in them. His interest in his church and people, is greater and closer than we can conceive. The Holy Ghost useth many similitudes to help our thoughts. Of them I would name only two of the plainest and most common. One is, of Christ's being the head, and the church his body and members; Eph. i. 22, 23. and iv. 15, 16. and Col. ii. 19. Another is, the marriage-union of man and wife; and especially of the first married couple, Adam and Eve, our first parents, Eph. v. 25,—32. And you may well think, that it was a fit match. When the first man was made, God took a part of this man's body, and made of it a woman to be a wife to him. So is the church, Christ's bride, taken out of Christ's side; not in a sleep (as it was with the first Adam, Gen. ii. 21, 22.) but in and by his death. As Eve was made a most excellent

woman, both for the endowments of body and mind; so Adam in innocency did doubtless love her perfectly. She was of him, from him, for him, and made to be with him. All this is but a shadow of the church, Christ's bride. The first Adam's love to his rare wife, was nothing to Christ's love to his bride. Yea, Christ is not only the head of the body, and the husband thereof; but Christ is to the church, as our souls are to our bodies, 1 Cor. vi. 17. All the life, power, and ability of our bodies, naturally flows from the soul dwelling in it. If the soul be never so happy, (as *the spirits of just men made perfect* are, Heb. xii. 23.), yet it hath a happy longing in its glorified state for its re-union with the body. So Christ, *the quickening Spirit*, (as Paul calls him, 1 Cor. xv. 45.), hath a great happy desire of having his glorified body with him where he is.

2. Christ is much concerned about glory to his people, because of his engagements for and to his people. There is a treble engagement of Christ that he lieth under for bringing his people to heaven. 1. The command of his Father, John vi. 38, 39, 40. And this *commandment is eternal life;* and this Christ knew, and revealed it, John xii. 49, 50. 2. His promise to his Father in the everlasting covenant. 3. His promise to us in the gospel, 1 John ii. 25. He hath engaged to his Father, that none that are given to him shall ever perish; and he hath promised often and plainly to us in the gospel, that none that believe on him shall ever be ashamed. And wofully would a believer in Christ be ashamed, if he came short of heaven.

3. The greatness of Christ's love to his people, makes him so much concerned about their complete salvation. Christ's love is so great, that it passeth knowledge; and some Christians love to Christ is so weak, that it is hardly seen and felt by them. It is not every one that can give Peter's answer unto Christ's question, John xxi. 15, 16, 17. *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.* Now, we know concerning love, that it natively lieth in wishing well to the beloved. Doth Christ love his people? How can he but wish them well? And how can he wish them better, than to be with him where he is?

APPLICATION. 1. Is Jesus Christ so much concerned for the glory and blessedness of his people? Then see how sweetly we come to heaven. It is by Christ's blessed will; his blood paying the price, and giving us the right and title to glory; and his heart and good-will giving possession of it. Thus are we saved, both surely and sweetly.

2. How firmly should we believe on Jesus Christ, and trust him for salvation? It is no small reproach to him, that is so often done by that unbelief and doubting that is so usual to some Christians. Christ minds our salvation heartily, and we believe feebly; he saying, *I will have them with me where I am;* and we often saying, *Lord, thou wilt not bring me where thou art.* Is it not sinful in us, and dishonourable to Christ, for us to be saying, *Thou wilt not*, when he is saying, *I will?* We should trust our salvation on Jesus Christ, not only as on him that only can save, and that is able to save perfectly; but as on him that hath more good-will to save, than we can have willingness to be saved by him. None had ever been saved by him, none had ever been brought to heaven, unless Christ had had more willingness to bring them thither, than they had to be led thither by him. *He must in all things have the pre-eminence*, Col. i. 18. and in this especially. Unbelief is in all doubtings of Christ's good-will to save. Whatever may be said of the leper's faith, in Matth. viii. 2. *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;* no perishing sinner can be quite excused, that shall put an *if* on Christ's willingness to save one that employs him in his office of saving, wherein his glory is so concerned, and his heart so deeply engaged. We should give him the glory that is due to him; to believe, that the willingness to save is greater in the Saviour, than willingness to be saved is in the sinner. For Christ's good-will to save, is the cause of any desire of salvation in any: Psalm cx. 3. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* When he hath a mind to save, he doth work this willingness in men to be saved by him: and they will own it to proceed from his willingness, when they become strong believers; and will see it and know it perfectly, when they get full salvation.

3. How strongly should believers love the Lord Jesus Christ? Is his heart so set on thy heaven? How filled with love to him ought thy heart to be? Woe to them that love him not, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. And in no better case are they that think they love him enough; and such as love any thing as well, and that hate not all things in comparison with him, Luke xiv. 26. To love Christ as thou dost thy life, will not be enough. It is higher and greater love that Christ doth deserve and require, and will only accept.

4. How patiently and quietly should we submit to Christ's conduct and guiding us in the way to heaven? Is his heart set on bringing you thither? Let him guide you in the way as he pleaseth. Doth he say peremptorily, *I will have them with me where I am?* Let him guide you as he will, while you are in the world. When a believer is satisfied by faith, that Christ wills glory to him in the end, he will find it easy to submit to Christ's conduct by the way. He may indeed, in some trials of his faith, be put to say, "This is a dark path I am "led to walk in:" but faith will say, "But I am in Christ's "hand; this is his way of leading me; every step that "Christ leads the believing traveller in, must lead to hea-"ven." He best knows the way; and the wisdom of the Christian lieth in following Christ whithersoever he goeth, and leadeth him. Though thou seest not heaven, the end; though thou knowest not the path he leads thee in; though the path, to thy sense, looks liker the way to hell, than to heaven: yet if Christ leadeth thee, and if thou be in his hand, it is impossible, but that Christ thy guide will bring thee to heaven, as thy home.

SERMON IV.

John xvii. 24.

Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

THIS chapter contains the best part of the gospel. If the gospel be good news from heaven, (as surely it is), the best part of those good news is what the Saviour sends up to heaven in this prayer. And what he sends up in this prayer, he brought down from heaven, from his Father, John vi. 38. I have made some entrance on this verse 24. the sweetest of this prayer, if comparison may be made, where every word is most sweet and excellent. I have spoke unto the manner of Christ's praying, *I will*. The manner is singular, and the matter is most excellent. The manner of Christ's praying here, is more like a commander, than a supplicant. What specialties there were in the person that made it, and in the season that drew forth this high word, you have heard.

The matter of Christ's prayer in this verse, I took up in four; and have spoke to the first of them, to wit, the description of the party he prayeth for. In this chapter, our Lord not only describeth them he prayed for, but expressly denieth that he prayed for any besides them, ver. 9, 10. *I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them.* From this description of them Christ prayed for in this verse, and in other parts of this chapter, I have spoke unto these three points: 1. That there is a select determinate company of men, that were given by the Father to the Son, to be redeemed and saved by him. 2. That this company was particularly and exactly known by Jesus Christ. 3. That Christ's heart was fixed and resolved on the eternal salvation of all them that

ere given to him. And here he expresseth it highly, in is *I will.*

The *second* thing in the matter of Christ's prayer, followeth be spoke unto; and that is, *the blessing he prayeth for unto em.* It is, *that they may be with me where I am.* There are ree things here, that I would first take notice of and ex-ain; and then speak to the words themselves; and give ou from them, the doctrines which I intend to insist more rgely upon.

I. The first thing I take notice of, is this *also*, and what is s signification.
II. What is this *to be with Christ*, as distinct from other ripture-words about Christ and his people.
III. What it is *to be with Christ where he is.*

I. Concerning this word *also.* It doth not in the least hint, at there are any that he desires may be with him where he besides those that were given him: but it is only his pray-g for another, and greater blessing, to them that were given him. Our Lord had prayed for many and great things for em before in this chapter and prayer. He had prayed his ther to *keep them*, to *sanctify them*, and to *make them all one the Father and in the Son.* "But (would our Lord say) there is something more than all this I would have for them;" I would have them *to be with me where I am.* ence,

Observe, Nothing short of, nothing less than heaven, and ernal glory in it, doth stint and limit Christ's heart and ayers for his people. For all he hath done for them, for all hath given to them, (and there is a great deal of both), there still this *also* in his heart for them, *I will that they also may with me where I am.* "I will not only go where they are, but I will also have them where I am." Nothing less than everlast-g blessedness to his people, doth limit Christ's will and prayers r them. He prays for every thing to them, and for this *also.* hen the apostle is speaking to believers in Heb. vi. 4,—9. gives a very gracious insinuation, after a most fearful

alarm. When he had spoke some of the most terrible words in the scripture, upon a supposition of an utter apostasy from Christianity, after great attainments: If *such as have been enlightened, &c. do fall away*, their case is desperate; they are soil that *bring forth nothing but briers and thorns, are near unto cursing, and their end is to be burned. But, beloved*, (saith he, ver. 9.), *we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.* All the grace that Christ giveth, all the grace that believers receive and act in this life, are but things that accompany salvation, that do pertain unto the state of salvation, and prepare for the full enjoyment of salvation in heaven.

There are several sorts of gifts that Christ gives, and believers receive, in this life, that pertain to salvation. As,

1. Their right and title to heaven. And that is Christ himself possessed by faith; *dwelling in their hearts by faith*, Eph. iii. 17.; *Christ in them the hope of glory*, Col. i. 27. That day that Christ entered into their hearts, the hope of glory began to dawn. And the deeper he enter into the heart of any, the greater is the hope, so as to make the believer *rejoice in hope of the glory of God*, Rom. v. 2.

2. The Lord giveth also meetness for heaven; and that is wrought by his Spirit and grace on his people: Col. i. 12. *Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.* This meetness for partaking is inseparable from a right and title to glory; at least so far, that no believer can have a comfortable view of his right, without some experience of his meetness for enjoying the inheritance. This same apostle saith to this same purpose, in 2 Cor. v. 5. *Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God; who hath also given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.* He hath been at great pains on us, and hath used many means and methods with us. And what hath all this been for? It hath only been the Lord's gracious and wise way of polishing and framing us for heaven.

3. There is *the earnest of the inheritance* that Christ gives, and Christians receive sometimes, Eph. i. 13, 14. This pertains to glory nearly. It is like *the first-fruits of that good land*, frequently spoke of in the word; and might be more often

tested by believers, were it not for their laziness and unbelief when they want it; and their bad guiding of it, when at any time they enjoy a little of it.

Application. Imitate our Lord Jesus Christ in your praying for yourselves. Imitate him,

1. In all your askings. There are some spiritual blessings that believers are very desirous of. Conscience terrifies you, and then you cry, O for the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, and for peace with God thereby, and peace within! O for victory over sin, and for strength to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing! All good prayers. But if all this were granted you, remember to pray on this *also* for glory. Beg pardon, and heaven *also*; holiness, and heaven *also*. Ask any good thing which you want, and which he hath promised, Ask every thing, and heaven *also*. Let your prayers for yourselves be as large as Christ's are for you.

2. Remember this *also* in all your receivings, as well as in your askings. His fulness is infinite, his bounty is great; but his people are but narrow vessels, and cannot receive much; and are leaky vessels, and cannot keep long what they receive. Is he kind, large-hearted, and open-handed to you? (as no believer dare deny.) Bless him, and beg heaven *also*. Jacob was a meek, lowly, humble man, and saith, Gen. xxxii. 10. *I am not worthy of the least* (or, *I am less than the least*) *of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant.* This man looks on the least mercy as a great mountain, and on himself as a little mole-hill. You would think, surely this humble man will not stand with God for any thing; yet he will *weep and make supplication*, as in Hos. xii. 3, 4. and wrestle all night, and say (doubtless with his eyes full of tears, and his heart full of faith and love) *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* Receive all his grace and bounty, with all the sense you can reach of your own unworthiness; yet still remember this *also*. Be not satisfied, so as not to desire eternal glory. Make use of all experiences of his grace to you, to quicken both your desire and your faith of eternal life. Let that *well of water in you*, which Christ's grace hath made in you, *spring up into everlasting life*, John iv. 14.

II. The second word that is next to be explained, is, *with me: I will that they be with me.* It may be some of them were with Christ when he prayed thus; it may be all the eleven apostles were there. But their being with Christ in the garden, was but a small matter. Christ was then at his lowest; then was the cloud thickest, and the eclipse darkest on the Son of God. It is another, and better place and case, that Christ prays to have them *with him* in, than this.

There are three words concerning Christ and his people, in the scripture, that are very good and gracious; but this in the text is beyond them all.

1. We find, that his people are said to be *in him*, 1 John 20. and 2 Cor. v. 17.

2. Another word is, that Christ is said to be *in his peo* 2 Cor. xiii. 5. We are in Christ by faith; and Christ dwe in our hearts by faith, Eph. iii. 17. So John xvii. 23.

3. And Christ is said to be *with his people.* This w amongst the last words of Christ, when going to heave Matth. xxviii. 20. *And lo, I am with you alway, even unto e end of the world.* "Though ye shall never see my face a "more, till I bring you to heaven, yet I am with you alway But this word of being *with Christ*, is above all those thre for as great as they are. This is *far better*, Phil. i. 23.

III. The third word to be explained in the text is, *where am: That they may be with me where I am.* Where was Chri when he said th se words? He was either in the garden, going to it. For what is in these four chapters, xiv, xv, x xvii. was, in all appearance, spoken by our Lord, partly at h last supper, partly immediately after it; as may be gather from John xiv. 31. *Arise, let us go hence.* Christ was on th earth when he said this; but surely he meant heaven in th word, *where I am.* He was just upon leaving the world, an on going to heaven; as he speaks, John xvi. 28. *I came for from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave t world, and go to the Father.* And John xvii. 11, 12. he speak as if no more in the world: *And now I am no more in t world, but these are in the world. While I was with them the world, I kept them in thy name.* So like is this bless

prayer to the intercession of our great High Priest in heaven. Now let us consider how far this blessing of *being with Christ where he is*, is above and beyond all he had done for, and said before to his people; and yet they were very considerable.

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ was made what his people are. He was made all that we are, except sin. There was no difference betwixt Christ and another man, as he came into the world, but only in this (and it was his glory, and our salvation) that he was sinless. But all his people are *shapen in iniquity, and in sin did their mother conceive them*, Psal. li. 5. Are *the children partakers of flesh and blood? He also himself likewise took part of the same. He took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren*, Hebrews ii. 14, 16, 17.

2. Jesus Christ was not only made what his people were, but he came where they are. He came into the world, their dwelling-place, and came down from heaven into the earth, John vi. 38. Never did any person come down from heaven but Jesus Christ. Neither could he come down from heaven, if he had not been God; for that body he took to himself, was formed *in the lowest parts of the earth*, Psal. cxxxix. 15. (as well as the body of other men) though in a singular manner. What marvellous grace and love was here, that the eternal Son of God would not only take on him his peoples nature, but would come and dwell where they dwelt, and that with delight? See Prov. viii. 30, 31. *Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him*, as the Son with the Father. It is very like to that in John i. 1, 2. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.* Ver. 14. *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.* But see farther what is said, Prov. viii. 31. *Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men.* When was this? *From everlasting, or ever the earth was*, ver. 23. *While as yet he had not made the earth*, ver. 26. How marvellous is this expression, that God's Son, the eternal Wisdom of the Father, did eternally *rejoice in the habitable part of the earth*, when there was no earth; and that *his delights were with the sons of men*, when there was no

man, nor son of man, in the earth? But *the habitable part of the earth*, though not yet made, was the place he was to come into, for redeeming his people. And as he delighted in it from eternity, he came triumphantly into it, in the fulness of time: Heb. x. 7. *Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.* He also loved the ground his bride was to tread on, the earth where they were to live in, and where in time he was to court the heart and win the love of his people.

3. Our Lord went where his people deserved to go. There is a good sense of that harsh-like word, *He descended into hell.* It is a Popish fable, to imagine, that Christ, after he died, went down into the place of the damned, either to suffer, or to do any thing there. His humiliation was accomplished in his dying, and lying in the grave for a time. But if we take it in this sense, that that stroke of Divine justice that his people by sin had deserved, Christ did feel and bear; this is the usual voice of the gospel. The sword of justice was roused, furbished, and drawn against Jesus Christ, and his soul pierced thereby, Zech. xiii. 7. He was apprehended, accused, arraigned, condemned, and executed, most unjustly and wickedly by men, but most righteously by God. Mens putting of Christ to death, was the most unjust and wicked act that ever was done in the world. But the Lord Jehovah's part in it, was most just and righteous. If you have ears to hear it, this is is a sure truth, Never did a damned sinner deserve hell more justly, nor was, nor shall be sent into it more righteously, than the spotless Lamb of God deserved the stroke of Divine justice for the sins of his people laid upon him. It was indeed infinite grace and love in the Father, to substitute his only begotten Son to be the Saviour of sinners, 1 John iv. 9, 10. It was infinite grace in our Lord Jesus Christ, to condescend to be the sacrifice for sinners, 2 Cor. viii. 9. But when both are done, justice was glorified in the execution of this sacrifice, Rom. iii. 25, 26.

4. Our Lord also went whither he had a mind to bring us; and that is, to heaven. And yet all this is short of *being with him where he is.* On this, consider, 1. How he went, and left his people: Luke xxiv. 50, 51. *And he led them out as far*

as to Bethany; and he lift up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. A blessed way of going hence. Our blessed Lord came into the world, as the greatest blessing that ever it got. He blessed his people while he was with them, and blessed them at parting, and will return again to bless them more. The last use our Lord made of his lips on earth (*into which grace was poured*, Ps. xlv. 2.), and the last use he made of his holy hands, was to bless his people; and the force and virtue of that blessing remains to this day, and will until his return. He went away blessing, and will come again blessing. He *ascended with a shout*, Psalm xlvii. 5.; and he *shall himself descend from heaven with a shout*, 1 Thess. iv. 16.

2. Consider what he went to heaven for. It was to possess heaven for us, as *the forerunner*, Heb. vi. 20.; to *prepare a place for us*, John xiv. 2, 3.; to *make intercession for us*, Heb. ix. 24.; to mind our concerns while we are here, and to welcome us to heaven when he calls us hence. You may think, that it is far more comfortable for believers now to die, having Christ in heaven before them, than it was for believers to die before he came into the world, as many did; or to die, and leave Christ in the world, as it may be some did: though his saving grace is the same in all the states he was in. But now we die to *be with him*, Phil. i. 23. to *be where he is*, John xiv. 2, 3.

5. Christ is with his people even while they are here in the world. This is also a great blessing, but short of this *being with him where he is*. There are two seasons when this presence of Christ with his people is known. 1. When they are at their best. When is a Christian at his best? Every one can answer, It is when most of Christ's presence is enjoyed.

When is he at his worst? When in great affliction, Isa. lii. 2. Paul found this presence: 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17. *At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me.* He had never a friend then and there, but Jesus Christ. *Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me.* When a believer is greatly tempted, then is he in a bad condition. Peter was warned both of his danger and relief, Luke xxii. 31, 32. Paul had this exercise, 2 Cor. xii. 7, 8, 9. and

relief under it; and makes this use of it, *Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* As if he had said, "I have got a trouble "some visit from the devil; but it hath been the occasion of "a gracious visit from Christ. And if the one come first "and the other follow, the first is to be patiently borne, and "the other to be thankfully received." There is also a presence of Christ with his people, even in their stumblings. Though he be displeased with them for their falling, yet he hath a double care about them. One is, that they may not fall utterly: Psal. xxxvii. 24. *Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.* Another care of Christ about his stumbling children, is, to take them up again. Lastly, Christ's people have his presence with him in dying. And it is a precious and needful blessing. Will Christ withdraw his gracious help and presence from his people, when it is so very needful? Paul calls dying by a sweet name, 1 Thess. iv. 14. *sleeping in Jesus.* It is a dark place and a cold pillow, that this sleep is taken on. But it is the sweetest sleep that ever the believer took. The body is freed from all pain and trouble, and will be sweetly awakened at the last day. And till then the Spirit is not only with him that gave it, Eccl. xii. 7. but with him that redeemed it, Psal. xxxi. 5.

But now what Christ prays for here, is far beyond all those. He was made what we are; came where we were; suffered what we deserved; went to heaven for us; gives his presence with us here, in life and death. But more than all is this, *I will have them where I am.*

There are two points of doctrine that I would speak to from this word.

Doct. 1. *To be with Christ where he is, is Christ's, and the believer's heaven; that heaven that Christ gives, and that believers receive.*

Doct. 2. *That our Lord's will is set upon his people's enjoying of this blessedness.*

I would at this time conclude with three words of Application of what hath been said.

1. Behold how greatly Christ loves his people. This prayer of his for them, flowed from his boundless love. He cannot be pleased without them, and they cannot be happy without him. All the glory and bliss that Christ is possessed of, doth not fully satisfy him, till he have all his people with him. His church is *his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all*, Eph. i. 23.

2. Behold how happy are his people. Moses sung thus of old, Deut. xxxiii. 29. *Happy art thou, O Israel: Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?* Much more may we say so, when Christ hath appeared, *who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*, 2 Tim. i. 10.

3. Learn to pray moderately for the lives of Christ's people. There are some of the godly that are very useful by their gifts and grace; and, if spared, might be of great profit to the church of Christ. Such we should be loth to lose, and their lives we may pray for; yet it must be done moderately. Who can tell, but Christ and we are praying counter to one another? He may be saying in heaven, "Father, I will have "such a one to be with me where I am;" and we saying on earth, "Lord, we would have him to be with us where we are:" we saying, "We cannot spare him as yet;" and Christ saying, "I will be no longer without him." It is the force of this prayer of Christ, "I will have them to be with me where "I am," that is the cause of the death of the godly. It is the force of this prayer that carries away so many of the saints in our day. Christ is saying in heaven, "I will have "them where I am. They are despised in the world, and "badly used on the earth: Father, let us have them where "we are." Should not we pray modestly for their lives, while we know not his secret will? and should not we believingly submit to his will, when he reveals it? Say, "Let them go from us, since Christ calls them to be with "him." It is his will, and their great advantage, Phil. i. 23.

SERMON V.

JOHN xvii. 24.

Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

I ENTERED last day upon the second thing I took up in the matter of Christ's prayer in this verse; which was the blessing Christ prays for to his people, in these words, *That they may also be with me where I am.* In opening of them, I did speak a little, 1. To the force of this word *also.* 2. What it is *to be with Christ.* 3. What *to be with him where he is.* And then raised two points of doctrine. 1. *That the perfect blessedness of the church and people of God, is in being with Christ where he is.* 2. *That it is Christ's will that all his people should partake of, and possess this blessedness.*

To the first of these I would speak, viz.

DOCT. 1. *That the perfect and complete blessedness of the church and people of God, stands in being with Christ where he is.*

Thus Christ expresseth it, John xiv. 3. *That where I am, there ye may be also;* and John xii. 26. *If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be.* The apostle sums up the blessedness of the church at the last day in this, 1 Thess. iv. 17. *And so shall we be ever with the Lord.* So also in 2 Cor. v. 6, 8. *it is called being present with the Lord.* And in Phil. i. 23. it is called *being present with Christ.*

There are four things I would premise concerning this matter, that may be of use to regulate your thoughts in hearing and studying the word of God about heaven.

1. This blessedness is greatly in the dark to us. It is an enjoyment *within the vail,* as Heb. vi. 19. And it is necessarily so. The thing we desire to be informed in, is, What

it is *to be with Christ where he is?* And here every thing is dark and deep. What Christ is, where he is, what it is to be with him, who can tell or know? When the beloved disciple, who lay in Christ's bosom on earth, is speaking of this bliss, in 1 John iii. 2. he saith, *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* Why! Did never John *see him as he is?* No. They that saw him in his humbled state, saw him under a vail, which his work rendered necessary for a time. And believers, that now see him by faith, see him not as he is; but only see him painted forth to us in and by the gospel, as Gal. iii. 1. No man can know what it is to *see Christ as he is,* till he do *see him as he is;* and that is not till he appears. To this belongs that word, 1 Cor. ii. 9. *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* Heaven will be a blessed surprise to all that possess it. It will be found to be far beyond all the most large desires, and the highest expectations, that ever were raised in their hearts. So will hell be to all the heirs of wrath, vastly above all their fearful expectations, Heb. x. 27.; and the foretastes of it, that are great in some wicked men: Psalm xc. 11. *Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.* No man can over-fear God's wrath; and no man can over-rate the glory to come. In that matter, the Lord *doth exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think,* Eph. iii. 20.

2. There is some light about this in the word, that helps us to know somewhat of this bliss of *being with Christ where he is.* There are three special ends the Spirit of God designs, in making any mention of the heavenly state and glory. — To disparage this world, and all things either enjoyed or expected in it; and that both as to the worldling, as Psalm xvii. 14, 15. where the portion of the ungodly in this life, and the blessedness of the righteous in that to come, are expressed. So doth our Lord compare the two states, to disparage the present, and to prefer the future, Luke xx. 34, 35, 36. and Matthew vi. 19, 20. And heaven is also spoke of, in comparison with, and preference above the best state of

what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. Doth heaven stand in *being with Christ where he is?* How is it possible that that man should know what heaven is, who knows not who Christ is? And none can know Christ, without a revelation, Matth. xi. 27. and that by the grace of the Spirit of Christ, working on the heart in and by the light of the word of Christ.

2. The experience of believing in Jesus Christ, and of living by faith on him, Gal. ii. 20. is a great help to the knowing of heaven. We know, that there is no faith of this sort in heaven. Faith is the traveller's, the runner's looking to Jesus, while the race is not yet finished, Heb. xii. 2. But the glorified above look on, and behold him so as we cannot distinctly apprehend, 2 Cor. v. 7. *For we walk by faith, not by sight.* And they above *walk by sight, not by faith.* You may say, that since there is such a difference betwixt the two states, of *faith* and *sight;* how then can the experience of believing afford any light and help to know what heaven is? In answer to this, I would have you consider, 1. That *faith*, though opposed to *sight*, yet is it, in its exercise, a sort of spiritual seeing. So is it oft expressed, both with respect to the author of it, and the actings of it. See how it is wrought by its author, 2 Cor. iv. 6. *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.* And as it is wrought by light, faith acts in seeing. Thus the great Old Testament believers are said by their faith to have *seen the promises* (*i. e.* the blessings promised) *afar off*, Heb. xi. 13. And it is a *looking at things not seen*, 2 Cor. iv. 18.; that is, things not presently possessed, nor fully known. Faith is indeed described in Heb. xi. 1. to be *the evidence of things not seen.* And that description, (rather than definition), as it doth determine what the nature of the objects of faith are, *things not seen;* so doth it plainly express, that the act of faith is drawn forth by an *evidence* of these unseen things. And this evidence and demonstration is in the word of God, which the believer seeth, is persuaded by, and rests upon. "I know not, saith he, all the great and good things that God "hath promised; but I know God hath promised them; and

"though they be hidden in the promise, yet because they "are secured thereby, I will embrace them in the promise, "until performance come." As it is expressed in ver. 13. *These all died in faith*, (But how lived they? By faith also), *not having received the promises*, (*i. e.* in their accomplishments; but the promises themselves they had, for on them their faith stood); *but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.* Here is an account of Old Testament believers faith, that is enough to shame and humble most New Testament believers. If we be helped at any time to set our Amen of faith to the promise of eternal life, we think it is a good length. But, alas! when do we find this *seeing afar off*, this *persuasion*, this *embracing*, this *confessing and declaring plainly that we seek and look for this heavenly country?* as in ver. 10, 14. 2. Consider, more particularly, faith in Jesus Christ. It always, (1.) Riseth from a discovery of him. (2.) Acts in an approach to him. Hence so oft by himself faith is called *coming to him*, John vi. 37, 44, 45. (3.) And in that act intends and seeks eternal life in and by him. 3. Consider the native and immediate effect of faith. It is union with Christ. He draws to bring them near, they believe to be near to him. His *drawing* and their *coming*, makes it up. Is then the state of glory, in *being with Christ where he is?* Surely, then, such as are united to him by faith, and have him *dwelling in their hearts by faith*, Ephesians iii. 17. and are *living* daily *by faith on him*, Gal. ii. 20. must have a great help to know better what it is to *be with Christ where he is*, than any unbeliever can.

3. There is the experience of communion with Christ, that is a farther and nearer help to believers to know what it is to *be with Christ where he is.* When Christ is revealed, he is believed on; when he is believed on, Christ and the believer are united; when the union is made, communion follows. This communion stands in these four:—

1*st*, In a mutual interest of the persons united. Communion is that whereby Christ is ours, and we are his; as Cant. ii. 16. *My beloved is mine, and I am his.* All that Christ is, is ours for our salvation; and all that is ours, is his for

his glory and service: that as Christ hath all right to dispose of us, and of all that is ours, because we are his; so we have a right to partake of Christ, and of all that is his, for our salvation, because he is ours. Communion is in the improvement of this mutual right and interest. I would name some of the blessed fruits of this interest.

(1.) By virtue of this interest, Christ's righteousness is a believer's for his perfect justification. The righteousness is perfect, and so is the justification. No glorified saint was more perfectly justified, than Paul was in the day he was made a believer on Christ. If perfect righteousness be the ground on which a believing sinner is justified (as the gospel plainly declares) the justification must be perfect also. If justification be sought by the law, and by works, the seeker of justification must still be doing, and can never have done; but is indeed undoing himself, dishonouring Christ, Gal. ii. 21. and *frustrating the grace of God;* and not only rendering his justification imperfect, (for *the law made nothing perfect*, Heb. vii. 19.) but impossible, Rom. viii. 3. It is impossible for God's holy law to justify a sinner; and never was appointed for that end, but rather to condemn, Rom. iii. 19. to stop sinners mouths, and to bind them over to the judgment of God; till the righteousness of God, without the law, come on them, to absolve them, Rom. iii. 20, 21, 22.

(2.) By virtue of this interest in Christ, the believer receives the Spirit of Christ for his sanctification: not indeed for his perfect sanctification, but for the perfecting of sanctification. Christ's righteousness is never applied imperfectly; for to whomsoever it is imputed, it is made over wholly, and to all the intents and purposes it was wrought out, and brought in by Christ for. But the Spirit of Christ is imparted to believers, in measure, and in various degrees, as he seeth good: Eph. iv. 7. *Unto every one of us is grace given, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.* By this potent principle, the Spirit of Christ, sanctification is even, at first, universal in the whole man, and complete in parts: 2 Cor. v. 17. *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are past away; behold, all things are become new.* He is a new man; is born again; hath a new nature, a new mind, a new understanding, a new

conscience, a new heart and affections, and a new life. But though all be new in the believer, there is nothing in him that is perfectly new. He needs daily to pray, as Psal. li. 10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.* Yet, notwithstanding of all the weakness of this new creature, the mixture and neighbourhood of the flesh, its contrary, and of all opposition it meets with from it, and of the low state it is oft brought into by the captivating power of sin; yet doth the power of Christ's Spirit not only preserve the holy seed in the heart, but doth raise it up again, and will certainly perfect it. There was never a saving work of Christ wrought in the heart of a poor sinner, that Christ ever left to be matter of triumph to the devil. Christ is a wise builder; when he lays the foundation, he knows what the perfecting of it will cost him, is provided with it, and resolved to lay it out, and to finish his work: Phil. i. 6. *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform* (or *finish*) *it until the day of Jesus Christ.*

(3.) By virtue of this interest in Christ, believers have all Christ's fulness for their supply. He is *all in all* to them, Col. iii. 11. *It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell,* Col. i. 19. And surely this lodging of all fulness should please, and doth highly please all believers: John i. 16. *And of* (or *out of*) *his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.* Eph. iv. 7. *Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.* Whence had Paul and John all their grace? Out of Christ's fulness. Whence was it that they received so much grace beyond others? It was *according to the measure of the gift of Christ.* But the stock and treasure is common to all believers. They are *partakers of Christ,* Heb. iii. 14. and *called to the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord,* 1 Cor. i. 9. The apostle, in Col. ii. 8, 9, 10. giveth a needful warning, *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit.* But how shall we know and discern the snare? It is *after the tradition of men, after the rudiments* (or *elements*, or *principles*) *of the world, and not after Christ.* His argument to enforce this warning, is deep and strong, verse 9. *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the God-*

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ations to them are. He
ighteousness, sanctifies them
m out of his fulness. But is
ople that Christ hath communion
here is; and that is all in them,
with their union with him, or that
is all the bad that is remaining in
of union with, and relation to Christ,
and delayed till they were faultless; so
dispensed, doth not presently remove faulti-
when this union and communion is perfect,
prays for. Christ's body is made up of
and they are, even while sin and infirmity
united to a sinless, glorious head. And it is
of his grace, that he takes such members into
himself, and maintains that union by communion
as their need requires, till the blessed day comes
prayed for, when this union shall issue in that
that shall quite remove fault and infirmity in his
To deny that Christ hath any interest, and concern,
about what is bad in his people, is to deny our
with him, in those things wherein we are most
and most sensibly benefited by it: for our own
and infirmity is better known to us, and sensed by
his righteousness and perfect fulness; neither is the
so well known to us, as by its gracious application to

our relief under the former. So our sinfulness (I mean, that that remains in believers, even in the best of them) serves for magnifying his forgiving grace. He that bids us *forgive our brother that sinneth against us, not only seven times, but seventy-times seven*, Matth. xviii. 21, 22. doth forgive his people many more times, and many sins, even *all* of them, Psalm ciii. 3.; *all our trespasses*, Col. ii. 13. And how blessed is that communion, when the blood of sprinkling speaks peace and pardon to a troubled conscience! Our corruptions and spiritual diseases are the subjects of Christ's care. And his care about them, is to cure them, and to keep his people from dying under them. The greatest care is used by tender parents, about their sick and wounded children. That man never knew the guilt of sin rightly, that thinks that any thing less, or else, than *the blood of the Son of God can cleanse from it*, 1 John i. 7. And that man never saw the corruption and plague of his heart rightly, that is not persuaded, that only the great Physician, Christ, can cure it. And no man can employ him rightly for the one, and not for both. And they do but deceive themselves in their religion, whose main heart-exercise is not with Christ for both. Alas! there are many disquieted consciences, and many defiled hearts and lives, in many that are called Christians; and some of them are oft complaining, and sometimes sinking in their complainings; and that because they do not believe, and lay this truth to heart, that the cleansing and purging the conscience from the guilt of sin, and the purifying of the heart and life from the dominion of sin, are Christ's proper works. The first he doth by the sprinkling of his blood, the other by the power of his Spirit, 1 Cor. vi. 11. Tit. iii. 4,—7. And all that use any other means for these ends, not only labour in vain, but sin greatly against God, who hath *made Christ unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that no flesh should glory in his presence; and that he that glorieth, might glory in the Lord*, 1 Cor. i. 29, 30, 31.

Not only are our infirmities, sinfulness, and diseases, under the gracious care and cure of our Lord Jesus Christ; but our persons, our souls, our bodies, and all our lots and con-

cerns, are at his disposal, to his glory and service. And every believer, in every distinct acting of faith, doth yield up himself, and all he is and hath, unto Christ's dominion. "Grant me thy salvation according to thy promise, and "guide me in the way according to thy will:" Psal. cxix. 94. *I am thine, save thou me.*

(2.) Christ hath communion with his own good in them. All that is in us that is our own, is bad: and all that is good in us, is of his giving and working. All our graces, are his fruits, Cant. iv. 16. and v. 1. They are all of Christ's planting, watering, and ripening: and he feeds on them as *his pleasant fruits.* All the spiritual services and duties that believers perform, are all of them fruit growing from their abiding in the vine, Christ, John xv. 4, 5. and are pleasing to him. And surely when it is so, the believer finds sweet profit by it: Rev. iii. 20. *I will sup with him, and he with me.* It is easy to conceive how we may feast with him; for he hath all. But how can he feast with us, who are nothing, and have nothing? He doth it two ways. 1. He feasts with his people on his own store of grace he brings with him. As David said, 1 Chron. xxix. 14. *Of thine own have we given thee;* so doth Christ say, "It is of "mine own I feast with thee, O believer. All thy faith, "love, repentance, service, are my gifts, my grace, that I "bring with me, and am delighted in." 2. Christ may be said to feast with his people, in and by that pleasure he hath, not only to give, but to see them feed on what he brings with him. Would you feast Jesus Christ, believers? Feed on him with holy hunger. Is a kind mother delighted with her hungry babe's sucking at her breasts? Is it not as a feast to a charitable man, to see a person eat heartily of the food he gives him? Much more is it a feast to our Lord, to see starving sinners feeding on the bread of life, and drinking of the water of life? Hear his voice, Cant. v. 1. *I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice, I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey, I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.* "It is all mine, all of my pre-"paring; use it freely, feed plentifully; you are highly

"welcome." But, alas! most Christians may give the answer that follows, ver. 2. *I sleep, but my heart waketh.* Christ's gracious offers and invitations are heard by us, as betwixt sleeping and waking: and so is it seen in the sorry entertainment we give them, and hence follows the poor life that many of us lead.

So much for the first thing in communion,—mutual interest.

2dly, This communion hath converse in it. It stands, not only in the mutual interest that each hath in another, but also in converse one with another. This is what the apostle hath in 1 John i. 3. where we have two *communions* or *fellowships* spoke of; the fellowship of Christians with one another, and the fellowship that Christians have with the Father and Son: and that this second fellowship is mutual, as hinted in ver. 7. *If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* They then that know best by experience, what it is to be with Christ on earth, in walking with him and in him, will know best what it is to be with him where he is. The greatest enjoyments of Christ here, are the best helps to conceive of what is to be received in heaven.

3dly, This converse breeds likeness to Christ. The nearer a man is to Christ, the more converse he hath with him; the more like he grows to Christ. Compare 2 Cor. iii. 18. with 1 John iii. 2. Paul speaks of Christians in this life, John of the same persons in the next life; and both speak of likeness to Christ, and as wrought the same way, by *seeing and beholding of his glory.* Perfect likeness to Christ, flows from a perfect beholding of his glory, and a begun likeness to him, from a begun beholding of his glory by faith. The apostle, in 2 Cor. iii. 7. speaks of *the glory of the countenance of Moses, which was such, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold his face, which glory was to be done away.* In this the apostle respects that passage in Exodus xxxiv. 29—35. It is this, that Moses, returning from the mount, after his second forty days abode there, had, by his long converse with God, a beam of heavenly glory impressed on his

face. Whether it continued all his life after or not, the word is silent about it; and therefore we should not be positive. But this may safely be drawn from it, that the more near and continued that our converse with Christ on earth be, the more heavenly likeness to Christ is impressed on the soul. Hath not this been known to many, that when they had been long struggling and striving with, and bewailing of a body of death, and of strong corruptions and distempers, that rendered them unlike to Christ, and lothsome in their own eyes; if he be pleased (as oft he doth) to draw near to them, and *to cause them to approach to him*, as Psalm lxv. 4. how suddenly and how sweetly is likeness to Christ wrought in the scul? True nearness to Christ, and converse with him, hath always this effect. Communion with Christ, if real, is always the life of grace, and the bane of corruption. And let all examine and judge their enjoyments, by this plain and sure test. Have you any thing that you call communion with Christ? Doth it not, in some measure, mortify your lusts, and enliven the grace of God in you? If it do not work both in you, it is not of the right sort.

4*thly*, This converse with Christ, and this likeness to him, breeds love and delight. It is not possible it should be otherwise. So great mercies in themselves, so great blessings to us, and so much of God's love to us, shining in the giving of them, must raise love and delight. This is one of the fruits of communion with Christ: Cant. ii. 3. *I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.*

The tree of life, Jesus Christ, hath a refreshing shade to the weary scorched traveller; and he hath fruit for the hungry soul. Sit down under his shadow, eat of his fruit, and you must find it sweet to your taste. *O taste and see that the Lord is good*, Ps l. xxxiv. 8. *If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious*, 1 Pet. ii. 3. See how the same apostle speaks of the communion that believers have with Christ, 1 Pet. i. 8, 9. *Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*

So that ye may perceive, that what the Lord is pleased to afford to his people here, in communion with Christ, gives a great help to believers, to know better what it is *to be with*

Christ where he is, than any unbeliever can; and that they who have the greatest experience of these things, have an advantage in this matter beyond ordinary believers.

So much of these four things I thought fit to premise: That the glory of the heavenly state is greatly in the dark to Christians while on earth: That the only light wherein any thing of it can be known, is the light of the word: That this light of the word, is light only to the eye of faith; and, lastly, That faith is helped in this discovery, by experience.

It now follows, to speak unto this that heaven stands in, in *being with Christ where he is*. And this I would give in these four things:—

1. It stands in perfect immediate presence with Christ. All the presence that Christ affords, and his people now enjoy here, is, in regard of this, but *absence from the Lord*: 2 Cor. v. 6, 8. *Knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.* I am sure, that there are few Christians, but think, that if they did but enjoy that of Christ that Paul did often, they would think it a great presence. But Paul counts, that as long as he dwelt in the body, he was but absent from the Lord. Perfect presence is, when all on both sides is present; all of Christ, and all of the Christian. But now all of Christ is not with us; and all of us is not with him. On his part, we have Christ's Spirit, word, and grace. On our part, there is present with him, our hearts, and the workings of our faith, and love, and desire towards him. But this presence is imperfect, and mixed with much distance and absence. And this sort of presence with Christ is but mediate. There are some midses, glasses, and helps, which, though useful now, will be useless one day, 1 Cor. xiii. 10, 11, 12. Yet this imperfect presence, and mediate, is more excellent in itself, and more valued by every one that hath tasted it, than the utmost that this world, and the things of it, can give to a worldling, Psal. iv. 6, 7.

2. This *being with Christ where he is*, hath in it perfect and full fruition and enjoyment of Christ. And here, words and

thoughts shrink far below the greatness of this matter. What it is to enjoy Christ, who can tell? Believers are partakers of Christ, are in him, and he in them. Faith, when strong, grasps at him, and cleaves to him. Love, when flaming, embraces him straitly; *holds him fast, and will not let him go*, Cant. iii. 4. When Christ's love to us burns and shines, and our love to him is kindled thereby, how sweet is this enjoyment! But all this is far short of what shall be enjoyed, when we *shall be with him where he is*. The difference is far greater betwixt these two, than there is betwixt the loving husband and the beloved wife, entertaining correspondence by letters to one another, in different and far distant countries. Thereby they communicate their heart, and love, and mind to one another. And this is very comfortable; especially when this intercourse may be speedy, and in an instant, as it is betwixt Christ and believers; Isa. lxv. 24. *And it shall come to pass*, (and blessed be he that this often comes to pass), *that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear*. There is no length of time required to carry the believer's mind to Christ in heaven; and as speedily can he send his mind to them again. But this is far short of the comfort of seeing face to face.

3. This presence, this enjoyment, is in the best state and place. It is *where he is*. And surely our Lord is well lodged above. All the presence we have with, and enjoyment we have of Christ, is not where *he is*, but where *we are*. And here we are on the dunghill of this earth; having sin cleaving to us to provoke him, and misery on us to grieve us. Hence it is both amazing grace in him to grant any thing of his presence and fellowship to us; and hence all that we enjoy of it, is attended with manifold imperfections, inseparable from our state while we are where we are, and not to be removed from us till we are *where he is*.

4. This is to be for ever. The greatest blessing hath the longest duration; if duration were a proper word to be used of eternity, which is justly called a *perpetual now*. Christ's presence now where we are, is a choice blessing. Believers would fain have it, when they are without it; and would fain have more of it, when they have a little of it; and when

they have much of it, they would fain keep it. But they cannot always have his presence when they would; nor can they always keep it, when they have got it. It may please him to *awake and leave them*, Cant. iii. 5. and viii. 4. even when they are best pleased with his company. And even then he is our beloved, and his love to us the same, when *standing behind our wall*, when *looking forth at the window, shewing himself* (or flourishing) *through the lattice;* as when *his left hand is under our head, and his right hand doth embrace us*, Cant. ii. 6, 9. Christ's sweetest visits to his people *where they are*, are often imbittered (to say so) with the thoughts and fears of his withdrawing. "Now, saith the believer, I have "a clear sky; but how soon may the weather change, and "clouds return again!" But in the state of glory above, when we *shall be with him where he is*, no fears, no ground, or suspicion of any such thing, shall ever enter into the heart of any of the glorified. The state of grace is a sure state, of God's making. No vessel of grace and mercy shall ever be emptied of it. But it is not a sure state to every believer's thinking; for fears of miscarrying may be, where no real danger is. But the state of glory is not only sure and unchangeable, as it is of God's gracious making, but it is so as to every glorified person's thinking. No pillars in the upper house can shake, Rev. iii. 12. Pillars in the lower house may shake, but never are removed. But in heaven, there is no danger, no fear, nor any cause of either, to eternity. *We shall be ever with the Lord*, 1 Thess. iv. 17.

Application. 1. See how great Christ's interest is in our salvation; how justly he is called *our Saviour*. He hath bought and redeemed the kingdom for the heirs, and the heirs for the kingdom. He as slain is made the way to it, Heb. x. 19, 20. He is the guide to heaven, and *Captain of our salvation*, Heb. ii. 10. He wills it to them in his testament, Luke xxii. 29.; welcomes them to heaven, when he calls them by death, Acts vii. 59.; and he, as fully enjoyed, is heaven itself.

2. Wonder not at this, that few are saved. From this doctrine you may see the causes thereof. We find Christ teach-

ing this doctrine of the fewness of the saved, in Matth. xix. 23, 26. Mark x. 23,—27. and Luke xviii. 24,—27. It is thrice recorded, and on the same occasion, and with the same sense of it in his disciples. The occasion of Christ's teaching it, was the great zeal of a young rich man, in asking of our Lord the way to heaven, and his sudden recoiling when Christ touched his idol. On this occasion Christ teacheth, *How hardly shall they, that have riches, enter into the kingdom of God! His disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them, that trust in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God!* Mark x. 23, 24. Upon Christ's repeating and explaining his words, it is said, ver. 26. *And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?* Why were they so astonished, and *exceedingly amazed?* as it is said in Matth. xix. 25. Were there not many poor people, that had no riches, nor any temptation to trust in them, (and such the disciples themselves were), who might be saved? Their amazement seems to have its rise from this, that if one snare, as that of riches, did so endanger a man's salvation, what greater danger were all men exposed unto, by manifold temptations, and disorders of their hearts? But as to the doctrine before us, that *being with Christ where he is, is heaven*, I may justly confirm from it what Christ taught, that few shall be saved. For few know what it is, nor the way to it, and indeed no natural man can know what they are. When our Lord is again preaching this doctrine, in that noted place, Matth. vii. 13, 14. he saith, *Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.* According to the frame of mens spirits, they frame thoughts of heaven, and of the way to it. The Turks paradise is brutish; the Popish paradise is little better. The natural philosophers conceptions of heaven are more manly, though carnal. Only a true Christian can have a right thought of heaven; because he knows Jesus Christ, and communion with him. Christ himself is the way to heaven, as he is a slain Redeemer; and Christ himself is heaven itself, as he is

a glorified, enjoyed Redeemer. All this is unintelligible and incredible to every natural man. Can ever that man count it blessedness to be with Christ above, who counts it a piece of misery to be in his company on earth? And is it possible that such can be saved, that neither know what heaven is, nor the way to it, and do dislike and hate both the way and the end, as revealed in the word, and as impressed on the hearts of all the godly in all ages?

3. *Lastly*, Would you secure heaven to yourselves? See to get into Christ by faith; seek acquaintance with him, press after communion with him. Let all your thoughts of heaven, all your care to secure your possessing of it, and all your exercise in pressing towards it, let all center in this one person, Jesus Christ. Alas! how many poor Christians are there, who go aukwardly to work about salvation? how poorly they fare? how sorrowfully they live? and how many of them die in darkness? and all because they mind not Christ rightly, as *the way, the truth, and the life!* They do attend on all the ordinances of the gospel; they would fain be in heaven; they often muse and think on it; and wonder at the greatness of the prize; and sometimes have some good hope, through grace, that they shall possess it. But with many these are but like *the morning-cloud and the early dew;* and their doubts and darkness return upon them; because they do not remember Jesus Christ, and live by faith on him, as the only way to heaven, and as he enjoyed is the Christian's heaven, and as he brings all the sons to glory. You need no more to secure your right to eternal life, than to be possessed of Christ by faith; and you need no better eternal life, than *to be with Christ where he is.* He himself describes it by this, *that they may be with me where I am.* And surely Christ best knows what heaven is; since he bought it, prepared it, and possessed it, for his people. And he knows the way to it; for he is both the way and the guide to it. *Hear his voice,* therefore, *and follow him, and he will give you eternal life; and ye shall never perish, neither shall any man* (or devil, or thing) *pluck you out of his hand,* John x. 27, 28, 29. Rom. viii. 35,—39.

SERMON VI.

JOHN xvii. 24.

Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

THERE are four marvellous things about salvation, that should be often thought on by us. 1. That there is so high a Saviour as Christ is, and so great a salvation as heaven is, provided for fallen man. There was no such provision made for standing Adam, to keep him from falling; no such provision for the fallen angels, to restore them to their first estate. But for fallen man this provision is made; not for all, but for a numerous remnant, according to the election of grace; and that to bring them to a far better estate than that Adam fell from by sin.

2. That the knowledge of this Saviour, and of this salvation, is kept from multitudes as needy thereof as any that have it. The Pagans, Indians in the east and west, are as needy of the gospel as you, and no more unworthy and undeserving than you; yet you have gospel-light, and they live and perish in gross darkness. This is only from his sovereign pleasure, as our Lord owns it, Luke x. 21. And that sovereignty shines, and is by us to be owned equally, both in dispensing and withholding the outward means of salvation, and also in dispensing and with-holding the inward effectual grace, and blessing of the means.

3. It is marvellous, (though both very sinful and usual), that this Saviour and his salvation are so greatly despised, by the most part of them who need him and it extremely, and have the gospel-offer made daily to them. Alas! few mind him, and few care for the great salvation he brings with him, and offers so freely to men. No man under the gospel miscarries eternally, no man or woman perisheth, without Jesus Christ, but such as do not in heart care for him and his salva-

tion. And justly do they deserve to perish, and dreadful shall their perdition be.

4. It is marvellous, that this blessed Saviour and his great salvation are yet given to a multitude of refusers. All by nature are unworthy, many reject the offer often; yet grace prevails at last on some of them, and makes them willing. There are many in the world (but they were thought on by him, before the world was made) from whom Christ will take no refusal, though they give him many; as Jer. xxii. 21. *I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, but thou saidst, I will not hear: this hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice.* Yet to many such there is a time of love fixed; and when it comes, they are spoken for, spoken to, dealt with, and prevailed upon. I cannot say, but that they that are early brought to Christ, have some special advantages, both in their being prevented from gross sins, and sad wanderings, and in the opportunities of serving Christ by his grace given them. But I am sure, that the longer any stand out in rebellion against Christ, when they are subdued, they should most of all men admire the grace of their conqueror. Paul, though called when a young man, yet counts that Jesus Christ *did shew forth in him all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting,* 1 Tim. i. 16. Yet, doubtless, Christ hath drawn forth more long-suffering to many sinners, than he did on Paul in his unregeneracy.

Of this Saviour, and of his salvation, I have been speaking from this part of this excellent prayer. I have been often commending this chapter to you: and though I hope none are so foolish as to think, that when they have got this chapter by heart, (and I know not any chapter in God's word more worthy of a room in the heart and memory, than this), they may make a prayer of it, as of one of David's psalms; yet I am sure we may pray upon it; for though many of the words in it be only fit to be uttered in prayer by the blessed mouth that first spoke them; yet all of them may be food for the faith of every believer.

I have spoke of the manner of this prayer; *Father, I will.* I have also entered upon the matter of it; and have taken

up four things therein. 1. The description of those he prays for: *Those whom thou hast given me.* None but Christ can describe those they pray for, this way. He only had the book of life before him in prayer. It is a great mercy, if we get spiritual light to read our own name in that book; but it is not allowed us, either to desire or expect to read any other name therein, but our own. 2. The blessing that Christ prays for to such persons. And it is expressed thus, *That they may be with me where I am.* Whence I did draw two points of doctrine.

Obs. 1. *That the perfect blessedness of the people of God, stands in being with Christ where he is.* On this I spoke last day.

Obs. 2. *It is Christ's will to have his people possessed of this bliss of being with him where he is.*

Thus saith our Lord, *Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.* This he saith of all them, without distinction or exception. This prayer is universal, for his whole body of the elect; and particular, for every individual member of that body. As they cannot be perfectly happy, till *they be with him where is,* (and that they all know); so our Lord gets not all his will and mind about them, till they are thus with him. And this we should believe. The meaning of this will of Christ about his people's bliss, is in these: 1. It is our Lord's heart's desire. 2. It is his delight to have them with him. 3. It is his fixed purpose and resolution. His heart is fixed in this, that he will have them all with him. 4. It is his will declared to his Father, in such a manner and season, and with such circumstances, as add great weight to it. 5. It is his will revealed unto us in his written word; and therefore is of great use to believe and rejoice in it. But who can tell (even when Christ hath told us it) what this his *will* is? The *will* of the Son of God, the the *will* of a dying Redeemer, the *will* of a man personally united to the Son of God; how far doth it exceed all our thoughts?

In handling of this point, I would,

I. Prove that it is Christ's will.
II. Shew why it is so. And then,
III. Apply it.

I. That *it is Christ's will to have his people with him, where he is,* appears from these two. 1. The price he paid for them; and, 2. The pains he takes on them.

1. The great and dear price he paid for them. The price was of infinite value, and the purchase was great. He bought the heirs for the inhesitance, and the inheritance for the heirs. Christ in redeeming had respect unto both; and himself, as slain, was the price for both. He bought us and our forfeited inheritance, as he oft declares. And this doth prove, that it is his will and mind that they should possess it. What wise or honest man is at cost to purchase that for another that he will not let him possess? When our Lord laid down his life, yea, staked down his crown and glory, and bore so much distress, and all for this, that he might at last have all his people *with him where he is;* sure we must conclude, that Christ's heart and mind was greatly set upon it. The grand view of the good-will of Christ to the saving his people, and having them in heaven, is to be had on his cross. The death of the Saviour proclaims his good-will to save. He knew he must save us by dying, and we know that we are saved by his death. Therefore he had a desire and delight to die for his people. *It pleased the Lord to bruise him,* Isa. liii. 10.; and Christ was pleased to be bruised, Heb. x. 5,—10.

2. The second proof is: The great pains that Christ takes on his people to bring them to heaven, proves that his heart is set on their possessing of it. On this proof I would insist in a few particulars.

1*st*, Christ draws them to himself whom he minds to save. By nature they are far off from Christ, and from salvation. By his grace they are brought near, Eph. ii. 13. Christ and salvation are inseparable. When Christ entered into Zaccheus's heart by faith, then *salvation came into his house,* Luke xix. 9, 10. Christ's drawing of a sinner, is his working of faith; and the sinner's believing on Christ, is his coming to Christ. Thus the nearness is obtained. Christ is *the author and finisher of faith,* Heb. xii. 2. But this way of working of faith is a great mystery, John iii. 8. Believers themselves find their own faith a great mystery to themselves. They often know better the fruits and effects of their faith,

than they know the actings of it. And again, they may know better what they do, and what way their hearts act towards Christ, when they believe, than they know what Christ was doing with them, when he was working faith in them, and making them believers. For usually Christ's work in drawing men to himself, is so terrible, that they cannot think that any good is meant to them. Little did Paul know what Christ meant by his first visit and words to him, Acts ix. 3,—9.; but well knew he afterwards, Gal. i. 15, 16. and oft did he tell it, Acts xxii. and xxvi. The sum of all he said was this: "I was a bitter enemy to Jesus Christ; yet he was pleased to "make me a believer on him, and called me to preach him, "and faith in him, to the perishing world." When Christ is drawing his chosen by *the cords of love*, (as Hosea xi. 4.), usually they are jealous that these cords of love are but the gins of an enemy. How is it possible that the charge of sin on the conscience, the discovery of the abominations in the man's heart, and the binding of him over to the righteous judgment of God, (Rom. iii. 19.), can be looked on as gracious methods of Christ for drawing men to him? Yet afterwards they know, that all this was done in love, and for their good. Of all the sins the Lord's people are guilty of, this is the greatest, and should be deeply repented of, even the rebellion against, and resistance they made to the saving grace and drawing arm of Jesus Christ. That we walk after the imagination of our own hearts, that we love to wander, that we may live in sin, and love and commit it; all these things are proper and natural to sinners: so that though all should abhor it, yet none should wonder at it. But when Christ is drawing perishing sinners to himself, that he may save them; when he is plucking them out of the fire that will burn them, and out of the water that will drown them; then for men to oppose and resist him, (as all do till his grace make them willing), hath somewhat in it beyond the common sinfulness of men: yea, it is a sin beyond the possibility of the devil, the father of sin and of sinners; for the grace of God was never in the offer of the fallen angels, nor did it ever make any assault upon them. Yea the reprobates, though many of them sinfully resist the general drawing of Christ by the gospel,

and his Spirit's dealing with them, as in Acts vii. 51. *Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye;* by which they draw on dreadful guilt and destruction, and are made inexcusable; as our Lord tells them, John xv. 22, 24. *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin,* viz. their sin of unbelief: yet they never resist the saving arm and design of Christ to save them; as many of the elect do for a while, till the Lord's day of power come, which always prevails over all resistance. For, sure, another sort of grace was applied unto blaspheming Saul, than on the traitor Judas; and on Peter stumbling, than on Judas falling. Herein Christ abundantly proves his mind and good-will to save his people, in his drawing them to himself, that he may save them. So saith he in John xii. 32. *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.* And this he said in one of his saddest hours, as ver. 27, 28. The devil, and wicked world, (that lieth in his arms, as in 1 John v. 19. *The whole world lieth in wickedness,* or *in that wicked one,*) they thought, that if they could once get rid of Christ, and slay him, that they should never more be troubled with Christ, nor with believers on him. But they were utterly disappointed; and this Christ foretels; and it was blessedly fulfilled, and will be till his second coming. It is as if he had said, "They despise the virtue and grace of a living "Saviour; and think if they had him slain, there would be "an end of him, and of his interest on earth. But when "they have done what they would, they shall find themselves "farther from their purpose; for I will put forth the virtue "of my death, in drawing multitudes unto me." And it is not unlike, but that within a few weeks after his death, and within a few days after his ascension, there was a greater multitude of sinners drawn to Christ by faith, than were in all the few years he lived and preached on the earth.

So much for this first proof of Christ's will and mind to save his people, from his drawing them unto himself, or his working faith on him in them.

2dly, Another proof of this is from his making them meet to possess heaven, Col. i. 12. Take heed in this matter. No

man is meet for Christ till he be in him. But he that is in Christ, is meet for heaven; and none shall possess it, but he that is made meet for it; and that is a divine work. Christ is meet for sinners, to save them. See how meet he is made of God, 1 Cor. i. 30. He is made all we want for salvation. Christ had no work in the world but for sinners. And none will employ Christ in his saving calling and office, but convinced and sensible sinners. None but such can see their need of Christ; and such as see no need of Christ, can never employ him by faith: for believing is nothing but a needy lost sinner's trusting this able Saviour with his salvation. *Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost*, Luke xix. 10. And the lost man comes to, and seeks salvation from Christ, and gets it. If a man disown his own name, *a sinner*, he therein disowns Christ's name, *a Saviour of sinners*. If men pretend to use Christ as a Physician, and subscribe not their true name to their petitions, *a lost, sick sinner, bleeding to death by the sting of sin and of the law*, he will have nothing to do with them. He will say to them, "I came to save sinners; but you are whole and righteous folks, and think you can save yourselves. It is but a little that ails you, and you think you can soon cure it. But if you try your own art you perish; and your wound is deadly, and no balm can heal it but mine." Now, no man is meet for Christ, till he gets Christ. But a man must be made meet for heaven, before he gets it. No man can get this meetness but by Christ and Christ's working of this meetness, is the proof I give of Christ's mind to give glory to them in whom he works it.

A little on this, What this meetness for heaven is; wherein it stands; and how Christ works it in his people.

This meetness to possess heaven, is twofold; a meetness as to the state of the person; and a meetness as to his nature and frame, that is to be the possessor of heaven. And the apostle, in that scripture named, Col. i. 12, 13, 14. hints at both plainly enough.

(1.) Meetness in the state of the person for possessing of heaven, stands in two things. He must be reconciled to the Lord of this good land of heaven, and he must be related to this inheritance. Both come by Jesus Christ. Enemies and

strangers are unmeet to possess it; and none such shall, to eternity. Yet all men by nature are both enemies to God, and unrelated to heaven. But Christ changeth the state of them whom he minds to save, and thus maketh them meet to possess the inheritance. They are made friends, and reconciled to God, by the grace of justification; they are made children and heirs, and so related to the inheritance, by the grace of adoption. And both are by Jesus Christ; as in Rom. v. 8, 9, 10. and viii. 14, 17. Gal. iii. 26. and iv. 5, 6. Can an enemy expect an inheritance from his enemy? And this is the natural state that God and man stand in to one another. Can a stranger expect an inheritance in a strange country, where he hath no friend nor relation to leave him any thing, and when the man is so poor that he can purchase nothing: The apostle in Eph. ii. 12. tells them what they were by nature, and what they should remember still: *That at that time ye were without Christ;* and what followed on it? *They were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise,* (Israel's peculiar right, Rom. ix. 4. *Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises*), *having no hope, and without God in the world.* How came the blessed change from this woful state? *But now in Christ Jesus, ye who were sometimes far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ,* ver. 13. *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners; but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God,* ver. 19. So that all that pretend to the hope of heaven, should search well, and make out, that they have a right to it, and friends there. And the great friend in heaven is Jesus Christ; who bought the kingdom dearly, and conveys the right unto it freely, to all that believe on him.

(2.) There is a meetness for heaven in the nature and frame of the heart of the heir of it. This meetness is necessary: Heb. xii. 14. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* And it is wrought by Jesus Christ in the grace of sanctification. Thus the apostle discourseth plainly in 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11.; where he expressly shews the equal necessity of justification and of sanctification, unto the inheriting of *the kingdom of*

Christ, and of God, and of the interest that Christ hath in giving them both. It is very remarkable in Rom. viii. 30. one of the deepest, and yet one of the clearest scriptures (deepest for matter, and clearest for faith) about God's method of salvation: *Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.* It seems to some to be strange, that there is no mention in it of sanctification. Only there is predestination, calling, justification and glory. The obvious reason of this is, that sanctification is included in glory. It is not so much the way to glory, as it is a piece, and part, and beginning of it. Now, this great work of Christ in sanctifying his people, is seen in all his work on them, and way with them, from their regeneration, until their welcome to heaven. About this meetness for glory by sanctification, these three things are well known: 1. That they that study sanctification, the right way most diligently, do attain most of it. The only way is by faith in Christ Jesus, Acts xxvi. 18. 2. That they that attain most of it, think least of their attainments. They see so much evil remaining in them, as Rom. vii. and so much good before them, Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14. that they still press forward for more sanctification. If any man do think himself to be very holy, any Christian may not only justly question the truth of that pretence, but also his having any holiness at all. For true gospel-holiness is a frame of heart and soul wrought by the Spirit of Christ, that works in believers a holy hatred of all sin; a lothing of himself in whom so much of it still remains; and a pressing after that perfection in holiness which only can be attained when he is where Christ is. 3. That all sensible and wise believers, in their building their faith and hope of possessing glory, and in their believing and pleadings with God for that possession, do lay far greater (yea, another sort of) weight on what Christ hath done for them, and hath promised to them, than on that small begun holiness he hath wrought in them; though that also be to be thankfully owned, tenderly cherished, and used as food to their faith.

So much for this second proof, That Christ proves his mind to have his people *with him where he is*, when he not

only draws them to himself when they are on the earth, but makes them meet to be with him in heaven. All he hath done for his people when he was in this world, is applied to them for the change of their state; and all he doth in them by his Spirit, is for the change of their frame. And thus by both he makes them meet for heaven.

3*dly*, Another proof of Christ's will to have his people *with him where he is*, is, That he, by his Spirit, works in the hearts of his people, desires, faith, and hopes of this bliss. This is both a proof that they shall possess it, and that Christ hath a mind that they should have it. Christ raiseth no desires, raiseth no faith and hope of that which he hath no mind to give. So the apostle argues, 2 Cor. v. 1,—5. *We know* what heaven is, ver. 1. *We groan earnestly*, ver. 2. *We groan*, as *being burthened*, ver. 4. *We are confident always* in those groanings, ver. 6, 8. The reason of all is in ver. 5. *Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God; who hath also given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.* So doth the apostle reason in Heb. xi. 16. speaking of the ancient believers before the law: *But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly;* (and this desire *they declared plainly*, ver. 14. by word and deed); *wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city, i. e.* heaven. Their desiring of it is not the cause or reason of God's preparing of it; but God's preparing of it was the cause of his revealing of it; and his revealing of it by his promise to them, was the ground of their believing of it; their faith was the cause of their desire of it; and this desire, thus raised and thus grounded, was a demonstration to them, that they should surely possess it. And so should it be to every believer in all ages. Hath Christ raised desires in your hearts *to be with him where he is?* Do you feel them in your souls? And are you daily expressing them to him in prayer alone, and in all your attendance on him in gospel-ordinances? If he hath yet farther opened to you the door of hope, as the day-dawn to thy heavy darkened heart; *lift up your heads* and hearts, *your redemption draweth near*, Luke xxi. 28. *Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed*, Rom. xiii. 11.; nearer than when *you first trusted in Christ*, Eph. i. 12.; nearer than when you first begged it of him.

Gracious Jesus will never baulk the desires of heaven which he himself hath put and kept up in thy heart: Psal. x. 17. *Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.*

4thly, Christ's good-will to give eternal life to his people, appears in the earnest he gives to them. This is oftner spoke of in the word, than known and felt by the readers and hearers of the word. It is called *the earnest of the Spirit*, from its immediate author, 2 Cor. v. 5.; *the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts*, for therein it is put, 2 Cor. i. 22.; *the earnest of our inheritance*, Eph. i. 14. for unto that it referreth. It is something of heaven given to believers on earth; some special presence of Christ manifested to them; some special fellowship with him, filling them with joy, and peace, and likeness to him. How well is this known to them that have it? And how sure is it, that no words can make any other to know it? It is *the hidden manna, that Christ gives his people to eat of*, (and no man knows its taste, but the eater of it, and while he eats of it); and *the white stone* Christ gives, *and in the stone a new name written*, (If it be written, may it not be read by any? No), *which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it*, Rev. ii. 17. Why is this earnest given? It is to secure the bargain of the new covenant to the believer, and to secure him of the possession of glory. Therefore is it called *the first-fruits of the Spirit*, Rom. viii. 23. *sealing of believers*, 2 Cor. i. 22. and *to the day of redemption*, Eph. iv. 30. This earnest must be a rich jewel, when the devil, that great thief and robber, sets himself so against them that have got it. It was more than an earnest that Paul got in 2 Cor. xii. 1, 2, 3. The devil hated Paul from the day that Christ took him out of his arms; he hated his gifts, grace, and service; and that Paul knew well, and felt often but he never fell on him so fiercely, as when Paul came down enriched with extraordinary enjoyments. No believer shall get this earnest, if the devil can hinder it; and none can keep it, without a battle with hell. But though Satan by his malice and craft, and our unbelieving hearts, join together (as too oft they do) to rob us of this earnest, and the sense of it; yet Christ will never take it away, nor break the

bargain of our salvation, Psalm lxxxix. 33, 34, 35. *Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail,* is the voice of God in the new covenant. It may be a question with some, If this earnest be an universal blessing to all, or only a special kindness to some believers? On the one hand, the discouraged complaining mood of some Christians seems to say, that they have it not; on the other hand, many have this earnest, and that frequently repeated to them. What shall we say to this question? These things we may be sure of; that it is a choice mercy, and a great advantage to a believer to have it; (as the contraries are as sure, to such as have it not); that it is a great duty to press after it; that there are ways and means of God's appointment for reaching it; that there are gracious promises of a blessing on those means; and that faith and diligence in seeking this blessing in God's way, is usually successful. It seems far safer for us, to lay our want of it on our own belief, than to reflect upon his word and way.

So much for the first thing in this doctrine, Wherein appears Christ's will and mind to have his people where he is?

II. *Why it is, and must be his will and mind?* Take these wo accounts of it: 1. Because of his faithfulness in the ovenant. And, 2. Of his love to his people.

1. Because of his faithfulness in the covenant of grace. he clearest and surest view of our salvation, is to be had in is covenant. Therein we see, 1. The elect are given by e Father to the Son, to be redeemed by him, and that he ay give them eternal life; as John xvii. 2. *thou hast given e power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.* This charge the Son accepted om eternity, and, in the fulness of time, came into the orld to fulfil, John vi. 38, 39. They were given to him, on ndition of his coming, and redeeming of them by his ood; which condition he fulfilled. 2. They are promised him as his purchase by the Father, when the Son hath ought them as he promised: Isaiah liii. 10, 11. *When thou*

shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied, &c. 3. The bringing them safe to glory, is charged on the Son, and promised by him again to the Father: John vi. 38, 39. *For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.* John xii. 50. *And I know that his commandment is life everlasting.* Christ stands engaged by this covenant, to give a good account of all his charge; and he will do it fully one day, when he presents his people to his Father; and will say of all, as Heb. ii. 13. *Behold, I and the children which God hath given me;* and as he said of a few of them in this chapter, ver. 12. *While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me, I have kept, and none of them is lost.* And surely Christ is as good at keeping of his people when he is in heaven, as when he was on earth: for *he is with them always, even unto the end of the world, Amen,* Matth. xxviii. 20. 4. Christ yet further promiseth eternal life to his people: 1 John ii. 25. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life;* as it is the grand comprehensive promise. Yea, Christ himself is called *eternal life,* 1 John i. 2. and ver. 20. When Christ came into the world, eternal life came into it: when Christ is shown and revealed, eternal life is made known; when Christ is embraced by faith, eternal life is got: 1 John v. 11, 12. *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life: and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath life.* O that all men did but know, how closely, how inseparably, and how eternally, Christ and eternal life are linked together! No eternal life without Christ; no Christ without eternal life. He also promiseth it, as well as contains it: John x. 27, 28. *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.* It is this, and such like promises of eternal life, made by Jesus Christ, that every true believer builds his hope of heaven upon. And thus

Christ's faithfulness and truth is concerned in bringing all his people to glory.

2. Consider Christ's wonderful love to his people. True love cannot bear long parting, much less everlasting parting. Christ loves his people so well, that he must have them with him; otherwise he should lose his love, and his beloved; and that cannot be. The love of Christ to his people may well be their delight, and their wonder. There is both pleasure and profit in studying of it. But all our thoughts can never reach to its infinite dimensions; for it hath *height*, and *depth*, and *breadth*, and *length*, and in all *passeth knowledge*, Eph. iii. 18, 19. And because of the sweetness of this theme of Christ's love, and because all I shall say in the application of this doctrine at this time, is to require love to him again; I would speak a little of this blessed love of Christ to his people, as it is the cause of his willing to have them with him where he is.

1*st*, Christ's love to his people hath no cause nor reason for it, but itself. Love is the only cause of his love. Our love to him hath good cause, and strong reason for it. His own worth in himself, his love to us, and the great things he hath done for us, and hath promised to us, justly deserve more love than we can give him. But none of these things are with us to engage his love to us.

2*dly*, This love of Christ not only hath no cause in us to raise it; but it is a love that acts and moves against all things that may justly quench love and raise lothing. There is not only no worth nor *beauty in us that he should desire us*, (as the unbelieving world thought, and thinks falsely of Christ himself, Isa. liii. 2.) but there is a great deal in us to make us justly hateful and lothsome in his eyes. There is enmity to him in our heart and nature; there are provocations in our conversation and walk; there are vileness, lothsomeness, poverty, and all misery, in our state; yet Christ's love overcomes all: Ezek. xvi. 6, 7, 8. *Thy time was the time of love, saith the Lord.* A strange time of love, and a strange love! A wretched, naked, polluted infant, *cast out in the open field, to the lothing of its person*, as ver. 5. Was that a time of love? Was that a time for the Prince of

heaven to fall in love with the filthy perishing brat? Unto any but to the heart of a God, this would have been a time of lothing, and not of love. The same thing the apostle teacheth without a parable, Eph. ii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

3dly, It is a love that sets Christ on work in all his saving work. And hard, and dear, and costly work to him it was: yet love made him to do it all; and delightfully he did it. He died for us in love; he called us in love; he planted his grace in us in love; he visits us in love; and when he corrects and rebukes, he doth that in love too, Rev. iii. 19. And though we do not like it, he likes it, and it is for our good. All that Christ doth for, and in, and with, and on, and about his people, (and who can tell all?), he doth all in and from his love to them. And this shews us both the nature of his love to us, and the debt we are under to love him again.

4thly, This love of Christ to his people, both designs and effects the greatest good to them he loves. Among creatures there is a deal of love to little purpose. Either they intend but little by their love; or, if they do design it, their love cannot reach it. But the greatest good, eternal life, is not only intended by Christ in his love to his people, but it is surely attained. All that Christ loves, are saved: why? because his love is saving. Salvation is designed by this lover, and is perfected by this love.

Application. Let me therefore exhort you to love Jesus Christ. Is his heart set upon the having all his people with him where he is? Surely we ought to return love to him back again. Most of them that pretend to the name of Christian, think they make some conscience of it, as being a most just debt and duty to him; and will be ready to say with Paul, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maranatha.* But as the love that Christ bears to his people, is not so well known and believed as it ought to be; so the love his people owe to him, is not so well paid as it ought to be; I would therefore advise you in five things about your love to Christ.

Advice 1. Take a serious view of the lover, and of the beloved, and of the love he bears them; of Christ that doth love, and of his people whom he doth love, and of the love he bears to them. When these three are seen by the eye of faith in the light of God's word, his glory and greatness who loveth, the vileness of them he loveth, the greatness of the love he bears them, two thoughts will rise in the heart. 1. How marvellous is it, that such a person as he should love, in such a manner, such persons as we be! 2. How great should our returns of love be to him again! What is the cause of this usual and sad remark, That carnal, secure sinners count it an easy thing to believe that Christ loves them, though they never tasted of his special love; when many sincere Christians find the faith of Christ's love to them so difficult, though they dare not deny their *tasting* sometimes *that he is gracious?* as 1 Pet. ii. 3. Yea, they find it hardest to believe it in such times, when either the divine dignity of Christ, or their own wretchedness, are seen by them; (and usually they go together). This is the cause of it, because this love of Christ is so mysterious and wonderful, (as the lover is, Isa. ix. 6.) We cannot easily think, that Christ doth love any, but such as are some way like him; nor do we rightly know, that Christ can, and doth love them that are not like him, so as to make them like to him by his love; for his love hath always this blessed effect in all them it falls upon.

Advice 2. Learn to believe Christ's love. Usually, we would fain have his love proved and manifested to us. But I advise you to take this way, of getting your faith to fix on Christ's love. Think not that I would persuade you rashly to conclude in yourselves, that Christ loves you. But what I design, is only this: Take Christ's love-letters and Christ's amiable picture in the gospel, (and the New Testament is full of them); and believe, and love them, and him by them. Behold *Christ crucified*, Gal. iii. 1.; behold him dying, and redeeming by his blood, and that in mere love to the redeemed. Read his love-letters, filled with gracious calls, offers, and promises: and all these letters sealed with his blood, shed in

love. A blessed exercise, that you would soon find the advantage of.

Advice 3. Then pray much for his manifested love to you in particular. You are to give him glory in believing his love-letters, and his beautiful picture in the gospel, and in raising faith and love by those helps: But you may also beg his manifesting his love to you. See his promise, John xiv. 21, 23. words more precious than fine gold, *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.* "I will love him, and make "him know it." And when one of his disciples asks, either in ignorance or wonder, *How this could be!* verse 22. our Lord answers, *If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come* (*i. e.* my Father and I) *unto him, and make our abode with him*, ver. 23. Very like his words in Rev. iii. 20. *Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.* Thus he manifests his love; 1 John iv. 12. *God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.* Ver. 15. *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.* Ver. 16. *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us;* (and so must we know and believe the love that his Son hath to us). *God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* Ver. 17. *Herein is our love made perfect.* But how did it begin, and how is it advanced? Ver. 19. *We love him, because he first loved us.* Alas! what are Christians doing? and how poorly they do? Where is the man who is sick of love for Christ? This blessed disease (or soul's health rather) is twofold; either in pining hunger for the manifestation of his love, as Cant. v. 8.; or in the overwhelming sweetness of his manifested love, Cant. ii. 5. If you know nothing of neither of these, your carcases may be well, but your souls do not prosper. I do not think that there ever was a poor believer, that did long breathe after Christ's love, but he felt it. Most people do not care for it; and therefore they seek it not, and therefore they find it not; and some of them may say (as they in Acts xix. 2. *We have not so much as*

heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.) "We have not felt "any of the love of Christ; we know nothing of it, but as it "is spoke of in the scriptures, and as it is to be enjoyed in "heaven." But how it doth burn as a hot fire in the heart, Cant. viii. 6, 7. even on earth, alas! few feel.

Advice 4. When Christ hath manifested his love, then light your torch of love at the warm beams of the Son of Righteousness. I mean, kindle your love to him at the fire of his love to you. No other fire will kindle true love to Christ, but the faith and feeling of Christ's love to you. What made Paul such a fervent lover of Christ, but that he knew so well how Christ loved him? *He loved me, and gave himself for me,* Gal. ii. 20. No wonder he said, Acts xxi. 13. *I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.* "Christ died at Jerusalem for my redemp-"tion; and shall I not die there for his glory, if he call me?"

Advice 5. When you have kindled your love to Christ at his love to you, then let it burn and spend (but it cannot spend, but grows by burning) in his service, and to his praise. Use and act that love in all holy worship, and in all gospel-obedience. That is the best worship, and the most acceptable obedience, that is performed from love to Christ. This *love constrained* Paul, 2 Cor. v. 14. unto his excellent living to Christ. That working and running that only the spur of the law in mens consciences constrains some unto, is of no account in the sight of God. Faith in Christ raiseth love to Christ; and faith and love enlivens to all holy obedience, and spiritual worship. Then the Christian reads and hears the word of Christ, because he loves to hear his voice. He prays; for he loves to speak, and to pour out his heart to his best friend. He sits down at the Lord's table, because he loves to see, and draw virtue from his slain Saviour. He hates evil, because he loves the Lord, Psal. xcvii. 10. He keeps Christ's commandments, because he loves the commander, John xiv. 15. Sirs, be assured of this, that you are not yet got into the right road of Christianity; you are not yet in that path, wherein you can be hearty and sincere, and wherein you will be constant, and never faint; until you get once into the power of the love of Christ. Then you will be sweetly car-

ried on in all your way, and in his ways. Then may the believer in, and lover of Christ, say, "Let the Lord lead me "whither he pleaseth; I am still going to heaven, and am in "the river of life, the love of Christ, that begun (if I may "say so) from eternity, and carries me through time, unto "the eternal enjoyment of the same love in heaven."

SERMON VII.

JOHN xvii. 24.

Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

MENS hearts are best known by their prayers. And by the same way we may know Christ's heart. Whosoever would know how deeply his heart is concerned in the saving of his people, let them read and believe this prayer. And indeed, unless people do know how Christ's heart stands affected to their salvation, their hearts will never stand well affected towards him, in their employing him for salvation. A clear and strong persuasion of Christ's hearty concern in and about saving of sinners, will make a poor sinner hearty in trusting him with his own salvation.

Of this I have been speaking from these precious words. The manner of this prayer I have spoke to. In the matter of it I took up four things. 1. The description of the party he prays for: *They whom thou hast given me.* 2. The blessing he prays for to them: *That they also may be with me where I am.* On this part I observed, 1. *That the perfect bliss of believers stands in their being with Christ where he is.* 2. *Christ's will is to have them possessed of this bliss.* This latter doctrine I did last day open and confirm; and began to apply it in one instance, of the debt of love to Christ that lies on all Christians.

I would now proceed to a more large explication of both the doctrines, and that in four exhortations.

Exhortation 1. Is it Christ's will to have all his people *with him where he is?* Then we are called to admire this wonderful will of Christ. This will hath its causes and springs, as you have heard. But these are so far from making it less, that they indeed make it more wonderful. For helping you to admire this will of Christ, I would give you a few things to consider.

1. Jesus Christ knows himself best. We hear these words of *being with Christ:* but little do we know what they contain and mean; because we know so little, who, and what Christ is. But Christ knows himself fully and perfectly; and therefore he knew what a great blessing he willed for his people, when he uttered this suit to his Father. It is the wise constitution of God, that the knowledge of Christ, and the enjoyment of Christ, and the knowledge of that enjoyment, are inseparable. We, alas! know little of Christ, we enjoy little of him; and therefore know very little, what perfect enjoyment of him is. But Christ knew himself perfectly, and what bliss his company would be to his people. This is one thing that may make us admire this will of Christ. As if our Lord had said, "My poor people know not fully wherein their greatest bliss consists; but I know it well, and will it to them."

2. Our Lord Jesus knew best where he was to be. I told you where Christ was when he made this his will, even near the lowest step of his humbled state. He was just going to the garden of agony, and from that to the death of the cross. But he prays as if in heaven already. And well did he know whither he was going, and what a high and happy state himself was going to, unto which also he meant to bring his people; as he commends it, and encourageth his disciples from it, in John xiv. 2, 3. But we, when we pray for heaven, we pray in the dark. We pray for a blessing, that we do not know, but in a very small part. See 1 Cor. ii. 9. 1 John iii. 2. If it were possible that any believer, out of heaven, did fully know what heaven is, that man would either be as in heaven, or would pray wonderfully for it. But well did Christ know what heaven was; and therefore prays for it unto his people.

3. Christ knew well where his people were; in an evil world, ver. 11.; and what bad entertainment they had, and were to have in it. In love and pity to them, therefore he wills this blessed lodging for them in heaven.

4. Christ knew well what their frame of heart and desires were. He knew what a heart he had put in them; that nothing less than being with him where he was, could content, satisfy, and make them happy. Would you know, when Christ begins to do good to a poor sinner? what is the first thing Christ doth to one he minds to save? It is plainly this: He makes such a hole in the man's heart, that nothing but Christ and heaven can fill. None but Christ, nothing but being with him where he is, can satisfy this man. Christ's grace given, *springeth up into everlasting life*, John iv. 14. And he that created this spring, will neither divert nor stop it. But as their hearts, by his grace, spring up to heaven; Christ's heart, in this prayer, springs up to that same everlasting life for them.

Exhort. 2. Love this blessed willer. Love Jesus Christ, who wills to have all his people in heaven with himself; and love him for willing it. But some will say, "I know "not that Christ wills this for me. If I did but know it, I "would then love him." *Ans.* 1. Though you do not know it, you doubt not, but he deserves thy highest love. No darkness as to your interest in Christ, can dissolve the obligation of duty to love Christ, nor excuse thee from the sin of not loving him. 2. All the devils in hell, or out of hell, or in thy heart, cannot prove, that thou art one that Christ hath no mind to have with him. If any of them suggest it, you have reason to say, they lie, and cannot possibly prove it. I will suppose thy state to be as bad as thou imagines; that thou hast no light, nor knowledge, nor ground to believe and hope that thou art in Christ's will and prayer; yea, that thou hast many fears of the contrary, and appearance of grounds for them. Yet it is certain, that it is impossible to prove, that Christ hath no mind to save thee. 3. Is it not some considerable encouragement to you, that it is certain that many just such as you, are in this will of Christ? This prayer was put up, and hath been oftentimes answered, for many just

such as you be. There is not so great a difference betwixt men in their natural state, as many imagine. There is indeed some difference in their outward conversation. Some wander strangely; and some are, by education, and restraining common grace, kept within tolerable bounds. But still as to the substance of an unrenewed state, all in it are alike. They are *swine still*, whether *washed*, or *wallowing in the mire*, 2 Pet. ii. 22. till Christ's grace change them. 4. You that doubt that you are not in Christ's will for glory, can you bless him, and love him, for willing salvation to so many others? It is a sad supposition, I own. And I think it sinful for any to lay it down as to himself, that Christ hath no mind to save him. Yet sad suppositions laid close to the heart and conscience, do sometimes produce and draw forth some good thing that lay hid in the heart. Let me therefore argue with such. You fear, or conclude, that Christ hath no mind to save you, that he hath no thoughts of love to you. Well. Though this thought be sinful in all such that daily hear the voice of his love in the gospel, I would say to such, 1. Is it not righteous with him? Do you not own that you deserve not his love, and that you justly deserve his hatred? Proud quarrelling with his justice, is very unsuitable to a pleader for his mercy. 2. Is not this sad case very afflicting to your souls? Alas! many have better complaints in their mouths, when there is little sense in their hearts of that they complain of. Surely, there are complaining hypocrites, as well as boasting hypocrites.

Is there any inclination in your spirits to admire, love, and praise Jesus Christ for saving so many? I am persuaded, (and that with good warrant from Christ's gospel), that that person that admires Christ's grace in saving others, shall never be lost himself. Yea, there is some heavenly fire in his smoaking-flax, or wick, that tender-hearted Jesus *will not quench*, Isa. xlii. 3.; nor will he let the *many waters quench it, nor shall the floods drown it*, Cant. viii. 7. although they be the floods of hell.

Exhort. 3. Search and try whether you are in this will of Christ. Blessed be the Lord, that no man can know that he is not in Christ's will; yet any Christian may know that he

is in it. It is a matter of the vastest concern, and calls for suitable diligence, 2 Pet. i. 10. Christ's prayer, and Christ's blood, are of the same extent; and both have an everlasting voice and virtue. This prayer of our Lord's was put up in the same night he was taken; and its force and virtue is still as great as when it was first uttered. So it is with the voice and virtue of his blood. It speaks to this day as precious things as when he shed it. Alas! our prayers have but little virtue and force when they are first put up, and that little is quickly spent; and were it not for *our Advocate with the Father*, 1 John ii. 1. they would all come to nothing, and never be more heard of. But it is far (O how far!) otherwise with Christ's prayers. They have infinite virtue when first put up, and that virtue is of eternal duration. Here we have our Lord praying to have all his people with him where he is. His prayers were always heard: John xi. 41, 42. *And Jesus lift up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee, that thou hast heard me; and I knew that thou heardst me always.* And surely he was heard in his last and main prayer for his own glory, and his people's blessedness, in this text. Christ did all the Father's will, in working out the redemption of the elect; and the Father will do all the Son's will, in giving the blessings bought to the redeemed. It is then of the highest importance to us, to know we are in this will of Christ, that always is effected; and in this prayer of his, that is, hath been, and will surely be answered. And, for your help in this inquiry about your interest in Christ's will and prayer, I would look into this blessed chapter, and Christ's prayer in it; and from it show you some marks of them Christ prays for; and let your consciences judge of your interest in them.

Mark 1. Of them Christ prays for, is in ver. 6. *I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world.* Would ye know if you be in Christ's prayer and will? Then see if Christ hath manifested to you the Father's name. It is his work, and his only; Matth. xi. 27. *All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.* Now, what

is the Father's name? Many think they know it, to whom Christ never revealed it. If you ask them, if they know Christ's Father's name? they have a ready answer. Is he not the first person in the Trinity? Is he not God the Father, the Almighty, the Maker and Ruler of heaven and earth? Yes. But this is the name of God only, and that in general. The name of Christ's Father, is that name and discovery of God wherein he stands related to the Son, and the Son to the Father, with the power and virtue of this name; as in ver. 26. of this chapter, *And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them.* In comparing ver. 6. and ver. 26. I would remark two things. 1. One is in Christ's way of his expressing his work in revealing his Father's name to his people. In ver. 6. it is, *I have manifested;* in ver. 26. it is, *I have declared thy name.* But though there be small difference in the English, there is a considerable one in the Greek; as any acquainted with the original do know. I never looked on the inscription on Christ's cross, written by his enemies, in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, as a warrant to preachers of Christ's gospel to stuff their sermons with shreds of those, or any strange tongues; nor that criticisms on the words in the original languages are proper for the pulpit: and if the preachers had as little pleasure in them, as the people have profit by them, they would be quickly laid aside. But sometimes the penury of the vulgar tongue doth not answer the fulness of the original; and in that case it must be supplied by farther explication; as in these two verses before, in ver. 6. and ver. 26. In ver. 6. our Lord tells the Father, that he had *manifested his name* to them; in ver. 26. that he had *declared his name* to them. As the words run in the English, they seem to us to be much the same; but as in the Greek, there is a remarkable difference. In ver. 6. Christ's *manifesting the Father's name to them,* respects the clear and glorious discoveries Christ had made to them of the Father's name in and by Christ's incarnation, words, and works. In ver. 26. his *declaring to them the Father's name,* respects the light and knowledge of the Father's name, which Christ had wrought, and was farther to work in them. The *manifesting,*

speaks the discoveries of his Father's name that Christ made to them; the *declaring* it, speaks forth the fruit of the former in his disciples. It is as if he had said, "I have made thy "name known to them, I have made them know thy name; "and they do know it;" as he saith, ver. 25. 2. Another remark I make in comparing ver. 6. and ver. 26. is this, That the fruits and effects are the same in both. Whatever difference there is in the words expressing this work of Christ, the fruit produced thereby is the same. In ver. 6. the fruit is said to be in two. 1. *They have kept thy word;* expressing their faith and obedience. 2. *Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee,* ver. 7. "My "person, my calling, my furniture, my words and works, "are all of thee." This they knew. And it seems to relate to what they say, chap. xvi. 29, 30. In ver. 26. the fruit of Christ's *declaring the Father's name to them,* is said to be, *That the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them.* The Father's name is a special discovery of the love of the Father unto his Son first, and then through the Son unto perishing sinners. See if you have had any thing of this. Christ teacheth the Father's name, and the Father teacheth Christ's name by his Spirit, when he draws men: John vi. 45. *Every man that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.*

Mark 2. Is in ver. 8. (And it is a sad thing if people cannot find their own name in no part of this prayer): *And I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me.* Search if Christ hath given you any of his words. He hath *the tongue of the learned* from the Father, Isa. l. 4. and useth it on all he saveth. We are saved by words; not by the words which men speak, but which Christ speaks: John vi. 68. *Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.* So here Christ saith, "I have given them these words of love, and "life, and power." Hath Christ at no time spoke to your heart, so as you have been made to say, *This is the voice of my beloved;* as Cant. ii. 8.? Men must hear Christ's voice, before they open the door to him, Rev. iii. 20. His voice makes the dead to hear, and live, John v. 25, 26.

Mark 3. Of one in Christ's prayer, is in ver. 14, 16. Such

are not of the world, as Christ is not of the world. They are *in the world*, but *not of it*; as the apostle distinguisheth, 1 John ii. 19. speaking of apostates. They were for a while in the church, and with it; but never of it, as appeared by their apostasy from it. Our Lord was in the world, as never any man was. *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not*, John i. 10. The world knew neither its Maker, nor Saviour. His people are in the world, but not of it. They have neither *the spirit of the world*, 1 Cor. ii. 12. nor their heart on it, nor their treasure and portion in it, Matth. vi. 21. There is something sown and planted in their hearts, that came from another world than this, and draws them to heaven as their home; and this world is but their passage and thorough-fare unto it. Are your hearts on heaven, and off this world? Conclude you are in Christ's prayer and will.

Mark 4. Christ prays for believers on him, ver. 20. Every one that can make out his faith in Christ, may lay claim to this prayer, (though he be but a weak believer), and to an interest in it.

5. *Lastly*, I shall give one mark in general from the whole prayer. Can you say Amen to all of it? Can you set your seal and Amen of faith and love to all that Christ prays for here? a hearty Amen to all Christ prays for his own glory, and the happiness of his body the church? Do you daily desire with the heart the same things that Christ here prayed for, especially as to this, ver. 24.? When you hear Christ's desire of having his people with him where he is, doth your heart echo to it, "I would, O that I were with thee where "thou art!" If it be so, you have part and portion in this good matter. If Christ's will and thy will jump together for the same blessing, then art thou in Christ's prayer and will; and there will be a performance of the Lord, when he shall get all his will on thee, and thou all thy desires from him.

Exhort. 4. Believe on this blessed willer of salvation, and on this will. You are not called at first to believe your interest in Christ, and in his will to save you in particular: but you are, on the peril of your souls, to trust this Saviour with your salvation; and the rather, because of his declared

fend, a little guilt to contract, and a little wrath to incur. All which are impossible to be, blasphemy to wish, and madness to expect.

3. Would ye put forth and act faith on Jesus Christ? Come to Jesus Christ on the same errand he came into the world for. He came into the world to save sinners; come to Christ to be saved by him. This is believing. Christ came into the world, to get glory to his grace in saving sinners; and the believer comes to Christ, to give Christ employment in his calling of saving, and to get the benefit of his calling. A sinner's giving of Christ employment in his office of saving is proper believing. The physician came for the sick, to heal them; and the sick seek to the physician, that he may heal them, Matth. ix. 12, 13. *The great and good Shepherd of the sheep* (as he is called, John x. 11. and Heb. xiii. 20.) *came to seek and to save that which was lost*, Luke xix. 10. When he hath found them, and caught them in the arms of his love, and layeth them on the shoulders of his care and strength, as in Luke xv. 4, 5.; then they, by faith, bleat, as it were, after his care and protection, till he bring them safe into the blessed fold in heaven, John x. 16. You may hear the blessed bleating of one of Christ's flock, Psalm cxix. 176. *I have gone astray like a lost sheep*, (as all his flock have done, Isa. liii. 6.), *seek thy servant*. And surely, when the shepherd seeks the stray sheep, and the stray sheep seeks the shepherd, they will quickly meet. If Christ come into the world to save sinners, and if sinners come to him, to be saved by him, he will save them, and they shall be saved by him.

4. *Lastly*, When you have given employment to Christ in his office of saving, leave it to him, and trust it with him. Are we commanded to *cast our burden upon the Lord*, Psal. lv. 22.? to cast all our care upon him, 1 Pet. v. 7.? May we not, must we not, cast our main care upon him? And is not *the keeping of our souls* our main care, 1 Pet. iv. 19.? If we cast this care on Christ, must we not trust him quietly with it? It is a great, but common fault with many Christians; they say they cast their care upon him, when yet, through unbelief, they keep the burden still on themselves. Remember, that on thy casting thy burden on the Lord by faith, if he

world but Jesus Christ. The first man and woman were made in the world by their great Maker; and all their posterity are *born in the world*, as Christ calls it, John xvi. 21. Only Christ *came into the world.* And this word comprehends, not only his incarnation, but all the work he did in the world, and all the entertainment he met with from God and man, angels and devils, when he was in the world. 3. His errand and business he came into the world for and upon: *To save sinners.* A strange errand, and a hard work! If there had been no sinners in the world, Christ had had nothing to do in the world. They therefore that deny themselves to be sinners, they do what they can to turn Christ out of his office of a Saviour. He came not to *condemn the world*, for that was past already, John iii. 17, 18.; neither did he *come to judge the world*, John xii. 47.; *but to save the world.* For at his second coming *he will judge the world*, Acts xvii. 31. There was never a sinless man in the world, but the first and second Adam. The first was such for a little time, and by his fall made all the world sinners. The *second man, the Lord from heaven*, (as 1 Cor. xv. 47.), was always sinless; and *by the sacrifice of himself put away sin*, Heb. ix. 26. and saved sinners. How frequently did he assert, and prove it by word and deed, that this was his errand into, and his business in the world? How frequently did his enemies, the scribes and Pharisees, stumble at his person, doctrine, and kindness to sinners; and that because they neither knew him, nor his errand into the world? If he was gracious to sinners, they call him a *friend of publicans and sinners*, Matth. xi. 19.; if he forgave a sinner, as Matth. ix. 2. they say, *he blasphemeth.* When the great sinner approacheth him with faith and love, Luke vii. 39. even his host, that was no open enemy, (since he invited Christ to his house and table), yet *he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would know who, and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.* And belike he thought, if Christ had known it, he would not have suffered her to do so. Poor man! he doubted Christ's being a Prophet: but he had no thought of Christ's being God's great High Priest. Brethren, Christ is not changed from what he was when he was in this world, now he is in heaven. He

or that they should make application to him. Most of awakened sinners say and think, much as the devils did, Mark v. 7. *What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.* I may say, that the devil hath better cause and less sin in saying so, than an awakened sinner: for Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; but he came also to *destroy the works of the devil*, 1 John iii. 8. To awaken a secure sinner's conscience, and to speak peace to an awakened conscience, are proper and mighty works of God.

I would conclude at this time, with a few exhortations to some duties of believers, from this doctrine of Christ's willing of eternal life to all his people.

1. Mourn moderately for the death and departure of believers out of this world. They are well where they are, and far better than they were when here, Phil. i. 23.; and we shall quickly meet again, in a far better world than this. This last is the apostle's argument to the same duty, 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14. Yea, this Christ himself useth in comforting his disciples in their sorrow for his own death, John xiv. 2, 3. And surely Christ's death was a more trying providence to his disciples than ever any, or many, or all Christians death, can be to us. If the glorified spirits of saints above did hear and know the mournings of their friends whom they have left behind; would they not say, as Christ going to die said, *Weep not for us, but for yourselves, and for your children?* Luke xxiii. 28. (Christ had still a kind heart to children, and expressed it when going to the cross.) They would say, "Fools, do ye "mourn for us, who are got beyond mourning? You will "never be well, till you be with us. You are but mourn-"ing over the rotten rags of mortality, that we have cast off. "You are but mourning over our tent, while we are in the "King's palace. We could not be in both at once. Judge "which is best. You are mourning over our grave when it "is empty, as they did over the empty grave and grave-clothes "of our Lord, when he was risen, and alive for evermore," John xx. 5, 6, 7. and Matth. xxviii.

2. Pray moderately and modestly for the lives of believers. We should pray for their lives; we should thankfully own

the Lord's mercy to them and us, when he answers our prayers, as Phil. ii. 27.: but yet we must pray with deep submission. It may be that Christ in heaven is desiring at that time to have them with him where he is, when we on earth are praying, that they may be kept with us where we are.

3. Learn to look Christian-like on your own death. Learn both to kiss death as a friend, and to defy it as an enemy, 1 Cor. xv. *55, 56, 57.*; and to triumph over it, as conquered and destroyed by Christ, Heb. ii. 14. and abolished by Christ, 2 Tim. i. 10. You all know you must die. It is a more common than godly word with many, *As sure as death.* I would not have men talk much, when they think little, of death. Nor ought any to think of dying, and going hence, without thinking whither they are going. But for believers, you know that death is that dark trance that you must pass hrough, in order to the fulfilling this prayer of Christ. You nust cease to be where you are, before you can be with him here he is. This world, and your condition in it, must be ean and low in your eyes; and Christ's world, and that con-tion in which you shall be, when in it, must be high to your ith, ere you can look on going hence, without amazement. herefore climb by faith, as to the top of Pisgah, and take a ge view of this good land of glory; as the type of it, Canaan, as, at God's command, beheld by Abraham, Gen. xiii. 14,— - though he was but a pilgrim in it, and did not possess it, t in his seed; and as it was beheld by Moses, Deut. iii. - xxxii. 52. and xxxiv. 1,—4.; though the sight of it was s and possession was denied him. But it is not so with us, to the true Canaan. All that behold it by faith, shall pos-ss it; and this makes the beholding of it to be the more weet to us.

I have commended this scripture to you, in 1 Tim. i. 15. pecially to help and direct you in the work of faith. That which we should daily act, and that which we live by; that we should daily hear of, and that without wearying. As Christ hath no other business in the world, but to save sinners; o sinners should have no other business with Christ, but to believe on him. Remember and believe this truth, There is

nothing a man can do with Christ, there is nothing a man can do for Christ, that can either please Christ, or profit the man, except he first trust Christ for salvation. The faith and trust of the heart on him for salvation, is the main service, and the first, he craveth. If a man shall pretend to worship, to obey and serve, yea to love Christ, and suffer for him; yet if he do not trust Christ by faith, all is a provocation to Christ, and all is unprofitable to the man. Believe this, you can do nothing that will please him, or save you, but trust in him. And if this faith were more diligently acted, all the blessed fruit, of peace within, and sanctification, and holy walking, and patience in tribulation, would exceedingly abound in you, 2 Thess. i. 3, 4.

SERMON VIII.

JOHN xvii. 24.

Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

I HAVE spoke to the first two things in the matter of Christ's prayer in this verse. 1. His naming of the persons he prayed for: *Those whom thou hast given me.* 2. His name of the blessing he prays for to them: *That they may also be with me where I am.* Christ would not be in heaven alone; he cannot be without his ransomed ones. He had sent many to heaven by his grace, before he came into the world, Acts xv. 11. He hath been still drawing multitudes of them, since he went back to heaven, John xii. 32. And he will shortly return again from heaven, to gather them all and every one, in soul and body, and carry them all home to his Father's house, John xiv. 2, 3.

It follows to speak of the *third* thing in the matter of this prayer. And that is, *The end for which Christ desires this bless-*

ing for those persons. It is, *That they may behold my glory which thou hast given me.* Deep words! and deeper matter! What is rendered, *my glory*, is in the original, *the glory that is mine*, with a special emphasis. This being the main and deepest thing in these words, I must insist the more upon it.

There are three expressions in this prayer of Christ's glory. 1. In ver. 5. *The glory I had with thee before the world was.* This he prayeth for. This glory that the Son had from eternity with the Father, was that glory which he had as the eternal, natural, and essential Son of God, which far passeth created understanding. But now this Son of God had taken on man's nature, and in that nature had done his work of redemption, and fulfilled his Father's will and commission to him: (for our Lord speaks as if he had done all, when it was so near finishing): now, I say, when he is going again out of the world to his Father, as John xvi. 28. he prays, that he, as man, and successful Mediator, may be admitted to, and possessed of that glory, which he, as the Son of God, from eternity possessed with the Father; and which was not interrupted, but vailed only, in and by his humbled state on earth. But this is too deep for us; but well understood by him that prayed for it, and who hath been long possessed of it.

2. In ver. 22. we have another expression of Christ's glory: *And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them.* This is another glory than the former. This was given to him by the Father, and given to his people by the Son. It was given to him, that it might be given to others by him; as his *receiving gifts for men*, Psal. lxviii. 18. *is called his giving gifts to men*, Eph. iv. 8. He received, that he might give. And great is Christ's glory, both in the fulness he received, and in his giving, and our receiving out of his fulness. All *fulness dwelleth in him*, Col. i. 19.; and all the receiving of his people are *out of that fulness*, John i. 16.

3. In our text we have the third expression of Christ's glory. And it is spoke of in three words. 1. It is *my glory*; "mine specially and properly." 2. It is *my glory which thou hast given me.* 3. It is a glory to *be beheld by his people.* And this is what I would speak unto.

This prayer of Christ, *that his people may behold his glory*, doth respect three things; which I would first dispatch.

1. It respects Christ's glory in itself. It wants (if I might say so) to be displayed and seen. This *Sun of Righteousness* (as he is called, Mal. iv. 2.) wants a dark world to shine upon, and would have eyes to look to his glorious light. He calls men to behold him: Isa. lxv. 1, 2. *I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.* He at last *will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe;* and he cometh in his glory for that end, 2 Thess. i. 10. And all he doth in and for his people, is, ver. 12. *That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* What a vast difference is there betwixt the glory that Christ gives us, and the glory he gets from us! We have nothing to give; or if we had, and gave, we can add nothing to his glory; but he not only gives to us, and adds to us, but he is *all in all* to us, Col. iii. 11. Yet so gracious is he, that if you put a perishing soul into his hand to save, if you bring your vile sores to him to be healed, therein he will be glorified. Christ is honoured in his calling specially.

2. This word respects his people and their happiness. Not only is Christ glorified in his people's beholding of his glory, but in this beholding of it they are made happy. There was never a believer that ever had so large a faith, or a heart so enlarged and inflamed with love, as to be able fully to take up what warm love, and what a high and great design was on our Lord's heart in putting up this petition for them. Believers on Jesus Christ, make no doubt but that he means well for you. Great things are designed by him for you, and more than you can imagine, in this prayer for you, that *you may behold his glory when you are with him where he is.*

3. This word respects the eternal work and employment of his people, when they are with him where he is. If any ask, What shall they do? how shall they be employed through the ages of eternity? Christ answers it here, *They shall behold my glory:* work that they shall never come to an end of; work they shall never weary in; and work that they shall have as little mind to weary of, as they shall have cause or

reason to be weary in: for every view of his glory will dart in fresh bliss unto the beholders of it.

There are two things to be discoursed on from this part of the text. 1. What is the glory of Christ given, to him to be beheld in heaven? 2. What is the beholding of this glory by his people in heaven?

I shall not enter on any of them this day; but would prepare your hearts to think of them. These two questions, *What Christ's glory is?* and, *What the beholding of it in heaven is?* are neither of them to be fully answered in this life. Christ's glory would be but a small glory, if either the heart of man could conceive it fully, or the tongue of man could express it all. If the glory that Christ hath prepared for his people be such as 1 Cor. ii. 9. how much more must Christ's own glory be? There was a man as able to tell as ever any was; and that was Paul. He had been long exercised in the study of Christ, and in preaching of him: yet he, when an old man, and in bonds for Christ, Eph. vi. 20. speaks thus, Eph. iii. 8. *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.* And surely the riches of Christ are both those riches of grace and glory that he is possessed of, and the riches that he enricheth his people with here and in heaven. Is not this a strange text? and is it not a strange preaching that is made on an unsearchable theme? Yet, for all he knew, and for all he taught, Christ's riches were still unsearchable even to Paul; though it is just to think, that he did dive deeper in them than any man since. Christ's riches, in Paul's eyes, were like a vast heap of gold, that no man could count; or like the vast ocean, whose drops none can measure or tell: and Paul did preach them the better that he saw them to be unsearchable. But if this man should be caught up to heaven, and come again to the earth, would he not be able to tell strange things then? So it was with Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 1,—7. But what saith he of it? ver. 4. *He heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.* Any Christian may safely think, that though there be a vail cast on these *visions and revelations of the Lord*, to Paul, as he

calls them, ver. 1. yet the main thing revealed, was the glory of Christ. But it was revealed in such a light, as was not fit to shine on earth; and therefore the apostle saith no more of it, but only tells us what he felt after it; both his great danger, and his sharp cure, ver. 7, 8, 9.

But though Christ's glory in heaven, and the beholding of it, be things within the vail, and cannot be fully known by us till we be there; yet we must not lay aside all thoughts and inquiries about them while we are here. There are means and ways that God hath appointed, that we should use for knowing them. By his blessing some knowledge of them is got: and this knowledge is necessary to all, and of great advantage to them that attain it.

I would therefore give you a few things more remotely about this great subject.

1. There is a discovery made to us in the word, of the glory of Christ. And there only are we to study it. It is the glory of the written word of God, that the glory of Christ is revealed in it, and to us only in and by it. We must not study to know Christ, we must not search into his glory, but in that light. There are three ways that some use, that are vain and unprofitable. 1. One is, by the works of God's creation and providence, Psalm xix. 1,—7. These do discover plainly the *being* of God, and *his eternal power and Godhead*, Rom. i. 20. and declare his wisdom and goodness. But nothing of Christ's glory is, or can be learned in and by the old creation. Such as talk of a gospel preached to the heathen by sun, moon, and stars, give them an office their Creator never made them for, or put them in. And if they that teach such doctrine, pretend to be Christians, surely they must have both a low and a false scheme of *the glorious gospel of the blessed God*, as it is called, 1 Tim. i. 11. 2. Another way is, by mens own wisdom. That noble power in man is quite dark, and dull, and blind, about Christ and his glory. It can do somewhat in its own sphere and orb; it can search into the earth, and mount up to heaven, and can contemplate God's glorious works. But it can never find out Jesus Christ, nor see his glory: 1 Cor. i. 20, 21. *Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? for after that, in the*

wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, (that is, avingly), *it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save hem that believe.* The gospel is, *the hidden wisdom of God in a ystery,* 1 Cor. ii. 7.; and the substance of it, Christ, is the nain and greatest part of this mystery, 1 Tim. iii. 16. Both hese are weak, vain means to know Christ by. 3. There is nother way, that is not only unprofitable, but wicked; and hat is the way of idolatry. And the whole of Popery is of his sort. They use many crafty devices to discover Christ's lory to the blind people. They have pictures of Christ, as n the breasts, as on the cross, as in glory in heaven. But istead of making Christ's glory known to men, they, by these ursed devices, darken his glory, disgrace the Lord Christ, *rucify him afresh, and put him to an open shame.*

The word of God then is the only light in which Christ's lory shineth; and in this only light must we inquire into it. n other matters, there are many truths and things that are emonstrable by nature's light, as well as they are asserted in he word of God. But about Christ and his glory, nature's ight, God's works of creation, and man's natural wisdom, in give no help; and therefore we should not call in their sistance. It is only God's word that can help in this great quiry, and it we should use.

2. The only eye wherewith Christ and his glory can be n, is the eye of faith. The only mental eye by which spiritual glory of Christ can be seen, is faith.—— *ith* is sometimes opposed to *sight,* as *sight* is taken for l enjoyment, 2 Cor. v. 7.; and *faith* is sometimes exssed by *sight,* as *faith* is a real apprehending of its obt; as Heb. xi. 1, 13, 27. 2 Cor. iii. 18. and iv. 18. and innumerable places, both in the Old and New Testament. id this eye is simply needful, even where the light of God's rd shineth most. The Jews had the Old Testament; l yet knew not Christ, and saw no glory in him, as was etold of them, Isa. liii. 2, 3. They saw him, and yet bered not, but hated him. So it is with all men to whom gospel cometh, until faith be given. No eye but that of th, can see and take up Christ and his glory; for two ases. 1. Christ and his glory is out of our sight now. And,

2. It is always beyond the reach of any power in us, but faith given by God. Christ's glory did once pass before mens eyes; but none saw it but believers, John i. 14. and 1 John i. 1, 2. Could any thing but faith take up Christ's *glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth?* Could any but a believer see him, and call him *eternal life*, when he was made of no reputation? At the last day Christ and his glory will make a great appearance, *when he comes in his glory, and sits on the throne of his glory*, Matth. xxv. 31. But at that day (though all the nations be gathered together) there will be no faith, neither on his right nor left hand. What a strange word is this? and what a strange day will that be? All the saved will have no faith, nor have any need of it, nor use for it. Sight and love puts an end to their faith. And all the damned shall be no more unbelievers; for sight and fear of Christ's glory will eternally remove their unbelief: Rev. i. 7. *Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him; even so, Amen.* But from Christ's going to heaven, till his return to judge the world, faith is the only eye that can savingly take up Christ and his glory.

3. This eye of faith is only of Christ's giving. No man is born with it; it grows up in no man by nature; no means, nor minister, nor any creature, can give it. It is only Christ's gift; it is by his Spirit, Eph. i. 17, 18.; it is the fruit of his *eye-salve*, Rev. iii. 18. All men are darkness, till made *light in the Lord*, Eph. v. 8. There are two things always done by Christ together, when he works faith. 1. He manifests and reveals himself; and, 2. Gives an eye to see him and his glory. No man can see Christ by his own power, nor can he see Christ against Christ's will: *If he hide himself, who then can behold him!* Job xxxiv. 29. If the sun shine, and the man have eyes, and them opened, he doth and must see, and never until then.

4. This eye of faith that Christ giveth, is of great advantage and use to them that receive it; as 1 John v. 20. *And we know that the Son of God is come*, (how do you know it?), *and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true;* (that understanding, and the knowing of Christ, is

faith): *and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.* This is the true God, and eternal life. I would name some advantages that attend the gift of faith, to the praise of the giver, and the profit of the receivers of this gift.

1*st*, The first life comes in this way. When Christ works faith in the heart, the new life is begun in the soul. The man that gets faith, and is made a believer, *hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life*, John v. 24.: and this life is from *the hearing of the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear, shall live*, ver. 25. Christ hath a voice to send forth, that can make the born deaf hear, and the dead live. But how is it in the acting of this faith wrought by Christ? We have a notable place for this in John iii. 14, 15. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life.* Our Lord is here teaching Nicodemus, a weak but honest beginner; and he teacheth him wisely, and teacheth him great things. He teacheth the corruption of nature, the absolute necessity of regeneration; that this regeneration is from the Holy Spirit of God, who therein works sovereignly, secretly, and effectually. He then preacheth himself to him, as he that came down from heaven, and was in heaven, ver. 13. He did not understand Christ's doctrine of regeneration: Christ puts him to greater mysteries about his person, and his mission from heaven. We may think, that he that said about the former, *How can these things be?* might be more puzzled to know how Christ was to save sinners, and how they were to use him for salvation. Both these Christ teacheth him in ver. 14, 15. and more fully afterwards in that chapter to ver. 22. And this he doth by a type, that no Israelite was ignorant of, though few masters in Israel did rightly understand it. The plain and full sense of it is this: As Moses (at God's command and appointment) lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, that every Israelite, stung by the fiery serpents, might look to it and live, as in Numb. xxi. 6,—9.; so Christ, the Son of man, is lifted up upon the cross, that every sinner, stung by sin, and the curse of God's law, might look to him by faith, and live for ever. The Israelites were to use the

lifted-up serpent, by looking on it, as the only ordinance of God for their healing: and were to use neither salve nor plaister for the fiery serpent's deadly stings. So the stung sinner must use a crucified Christ, as the only ordinance of God for life, and eternal life; and that life comes to him only by this look of faith.

2dly, All the believers growth and increase in grace and life, is by believing beholding of the grace and glory of Christ. When the apostle is exhorting to growth in grace, as the sure preservative against apostasy, 2 Pet. ii. 8. he adds, *Grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* As if he had said, "If you would grow in grace, you must also grow "in the knowledge of Christ." Yea, when he is speaking of the greatest attainments in grace, 2 Pet. ii. 18. he tells this is the fruit of them: *They make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* But more directly Paul teacheth us, how faith advanceth the Christian in his new life; 2 Cor. iii. 18. *But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. We all:* it is not only I Paul, whom you may think singularly privileged: but all we, who, under the dispensation of the gospel, have had the vail taken off our hearts and eyes, we all behold the same glory of Christ, and with the same sort of fruit. Though we do not all behold it in the same clearness and brightness, nor with the same measure of fruit; yet all that do truly behold his glory, are truly made conformable to him. If no likeness to Christ's image be wrought in you, you make it to be justly suspected, that it is either not the right Lord you behold, or not the right eye you behold him with, or that it is not a right glass you behold him in. For where all three are right, the fruit of likeness to Christ never faileth.

3dly, All the peace, and comfort, and joy of heart, which believers have in this life, come in by believing beholding of Christ, and of his grace and glory. Joy and peace fills the heart by believing, Rom. xv. 13. What can distress a believer when Christ's glory is seen? and what can quiet his heart, when a dark cloud and vail is on his glory? No storm

can be on a Christian, and no fear can disquiet him so, but that word, spoke with Christ's power will comfort, Matth. xiv. 27. *Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid.* Thus were they made to *rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, who loved him, and believed on him they had not seen,* 1 Pet. i. 8.

So much for the fourth thing, That the eye of faith, and its exercise is of great advantage to a Christian.

5. The beholding of the glory of Christ by the eye of faith, is the greatest and surest test of mens state that can be. They that have it, are true Christians; for thus are they made such; as 1 John v. 20. They that never saw Christ's glory, remain still in the pit of condemned nature, where darkness and death do rule.

6. and *lastly,* The beholding of Christ's glory by faith, as it is revealed in the gospel, is a good help to understand what the beholding of his glory in heaven is: for it is the same Christ, the same glory of Christ, that is beheld in earth and in heaven. Only this glory shines in another manner in heaven, and is beheld with another and higher eye than faith; though faith is the best eye, and the gospel the best glass, on earth. On this I would shew how impossible it is, that an unbeliever, that never saw Christ's glory in the gospel, can have any right apprehension of the beholding his glory in heaven.

1*st,* Consider what heaven is. The Lord of it tells us, it is in *being with him where he is.* Now, that man that never knew what Christ's company on earth is, can never know what his company in heaven is. Speak to him of heaven, as a state of rest and happiness, where no crosses, nor death, nor trouble, can be; this the natural man can know and relish. But Christ's true heaven, and Christ's picture of it in the word, are as dark and disgustful to an unbeliever, as Christ's yoke and burthen is. But to a believer, *whom the Lord hath chosen, and caused to approach to him,* Psal. lxv. 4.; who hath been oft made to say, Psal. lxxiii. 28. *It is good for me to draw near to God;* and can say, as 1 John i. 3. *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ:* to such, I say, *being with Christ where he is,* hath another light in his mind, and another gust in his heart.

2*dly,* The work of heaven, to behold Christ's glory, cannot

be understood by an unbeliever, no more than a born blind man can know what pleasure and profit is in beholding the glory and light of the sun. And if such would and could search their hearts, they would find; and if they were ingenuous, they would own the truth, (as some of them in blasphemy do say), that the gospel-discovery of heaven is dark and disgustful to them; they neither know it nor love it. It is hid from their blinded eyes, and cross to their carnal hearts.

3*dly*, They know not the title to heaven; how a man comes by a right to it, and enters into the possession of it. And that is, by free grace in Jesus Christ. And this is no small part of Christ's glory, and of believers happiness, that it is so. This title is only to be perceived by faith. The same grace that we owe the forgiveness of sin to, we owe the possessing of glory to, Acts xxvi. 18. By that same grace that we are welcomed to Christ's house of grace on earth, Rom. v. 2. by the same grace we are welcomed into Christ's house of glory above. It is *grace brought to us*, 1 Pet. i. 13.; it is *the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*, Jude, ver. 21. But an unbeliever, who hath no knowledge nor relish of this blessed tenure to glory by free grace, what fit and right thoughts can he have of heaven? All men are by nature ignorant of the true heaven, of the true way to it, of the true work and bliss in it, and of the only title to it, and tenure of it; and therefore need what the apostle prays for in Eph. i. 17, 18, 19.

Application. Although you may think it preposterous, to speak any thing in application, before we enter upon the doctrine itself; yet, as what hath been said, is but introductory to what I intend (if the Lord will) further to speak on this great subject, so what I say now in application, shall be accordingly managed.

The text we have before us, is about the beholding of Christ's glory in heaven. I have been shewing you, that it is simply necessary to any right understanding of this great bliss, that a man do know, in his experience, somewhat of the beholding of Christ's glory by faith in this life. Without this,

no words that men can speak about this, can be understood by natural men: 1 Cor. ii. 14. *For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.* I may truly say, that no natural man doth, or can understand this verse. It is grievous and shameful, to see and read what blundering confused work many wise and learned men, but destitute of that mind and Spirit of Christ that led Paul in writing of it, make of this verse; when it is plain and bright, though deep, to every ordinary Christian. Now, the glory of Christ, and the beholding of it, are of the deepest of *the deep things of God*, ver. 10. How then can a natural man receive them, know them, or discern them? He is without that spiritual faculty by which only they can be rightly entertained. It is a dangerous and hurtful practice to the church of God, to the souls of men, and to the truths of God (and not a few are guilty of it, and many smart by it), for men to endeavour to bring down the deep mysteries of the gospel unto the sense and gust of a natural unrenewed man. It is sure, that they that teach, should teach plainly; and they that write, should make *the vision plain, that he may run that readeth it*, Hab. ii. 2. But they must still *speak*, or write, *as the oracles of God*, 1 Pet. iv. 11. and as *stewards of the mysteries of God*, 1 Cor. iv. 1. If, as it is undoubted, we cannot bring up the natural man's understanding unto the deep things of God; we must not essay to bring down the depths of God unto their natural blindness. This were to degrade the things of the Spirit of God, and to delude the sinner. But let us study to declare God's mind in his word, as plainly as we can, to natural men that hear us; and withal tell them, that the things themselves, of which we speak as plainly as we can, are beyond their reach; that they may know that the things of God are deep, and they themselves are blind, till the Spirit of Christ *open the understanding*, and *open the scriptures* unto them; as he did to his disciples, Luke xxiv. 32, 45.

My work at this time shall be, to offer you some helps to try yourselves, and to find this out, Whether ever you have beheld the glory of Christ in the gospel? You have the gos-

pel-glass, and most of you think you have the eye of faith also. My question that I put to your consciences, is, Have you seen his glory in the gospel by faith? If you have, then you will find three things:

1. Wherever Christ's glory is seen by faith, it is always seen as singular, transcendent, and matchless. So it is in itself, and so it is seen by all that do behold it. Paul calls his knowledge of Christ, *the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord*, Phil. iii. 8. And that you may not think that he thought he had a great deal of it, and that you might know that Paul is rather commending Christ's excellency, than the measure of his attainments in the knowledge of Christ; he tells us in ver. 10,—14. how small an opinion he had of what he had attained, in respect of what he wanted, and followed, and pressed after. If ever you had a true view of Christ's glory, you will judge, that there is no glory like it. What you formerly thought glorious, you will then say of it, as 2 Cor. iii. 10. *For even that which was made glorious, had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excelleth.* And the apostle is there speaking of the most outwardly glorious appearance that ever God made in the world, in giving the law. And as he saith again, of that that is most glorious in the eyes of one that knows not Christ, his own righteousness, in Phil. iii. 8, 9. he calls it, and all things else, *loss and dung*, compared with Christ. And so will every man that seeth Christ with any thing of Paul's eye. For illustration: Suppose a man blind from the womb, had his eye-sight given him by God, as it was, in John ix.; suppose that his sight were given him in the night, and in the house, he would doubtless wonder at the light of candles: but if he went abroad, and saw the stars in the firmament, or if the moon did shine, this would be more glorious still: yet when the morning dawneth, and when the sun riseth and shineth, would not the man think, "Surely "I never saw such a glorious light before?" Fire and candles on earth, and moon and stars in heaven, have no such light as the sun. So will it be unto them to whom *the Sun of Righteousness ariseth with healing in his wings*, Mal. iv. 2. with salvation in his beams. He will say, "No glory like Christ's

"glory, no man like him; no angel, no creature, like him." If Christ's glory hath not disgraced all other glory save his own, you have either seen little of it, or none at all.

2. When the glory of Christ is seen by faith, desires of seeing more of it rise in the heart. What the preacher saith in general about seeing, in Eccl. i. 8. *The eye is not satisfied with seeing*, is justly applicable to this spiritual eye in beholding Christ's glory. It is not satisfied, nor ever will, till the believer is with Christ where he is, and beholds his glory there. Paul had many and singular views of Christ's glory, and yet is studying Christ still. If you knew Christ as well as Paul did, you would be of his mind: yea, if you have any right beholding of his glory, you will still desire more.

3. He that beholds Christ's glory truly, he perceives his own darkness and blindness, and is humbled thereby. You may think this a strange mark; but it is a sure one. It is strange, but most true, that an unbeliever, who *hath never heard Christ's voice, nor seen his shape*, (as Christ saith to the Jews concerning his Father, John v. 27.), may, and many of them do think, that they know Christ, and may say, as Hos. viii. 2. *My God, we know thee;* "My Saviour, I know thee;" when a true beholder of Christ's glory thinks, that he doth not know him at all, or next to nothing. And those thoughts, are proofs, that the one is quite ignorant of Christ, and that the other is begun to know him. What the apostle saith, 1 Cor. viii. 2. *If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know*, holds good especially in the knowledge of Christ. A proud conceit of a man's knowing Christ, is a demonstration that the man never saw his glory. Even as if a man should say, "I have seen the sun "in his noon-day glory, and I can stare upon it steadily." Would not any man think, that either this man hath not right eyes, or that he hath not seen the right sun, but only a picture of it, that hath or can have nothing of the true sun's light, and heat, and influence; or that the man lieth grossly? for all know, that the glory of the sun is too great and bright for the sharpest and strongest eye. When a man from the top of a high mountain looks round about him, he can see many miles and many things, if this man have high thoughts

Mix your prayers for new wanted grace, with praises for his old dispensed grace. Christ loves you, and hath proved it; believe it, bless him for it, and wait for his renewing his love to you; and in due time you will find, that he will not only answer, but outdo all your desires to him, and all your expectations from him.

Obs. 3. The beholding of Christ's glory in heaven, is the main part of the happiness of his people in it. So Christ expresseth it, (as I glanced at it before), as if he would explain what his people should get and do, when *they are where he is, they shall behold his glory.* This is that true beatific vision, that happy-making sight, that so many of the schoolmen (generally better philosophers than divines) do talk and write of. But poorly must all such talk and think of it, that are unacquainted with Christ and his grace in their own hearts. But this is sure, and plainly revealed, that the happiness of the glorified stands and flourisheth to eternity in the *beholding of Christ's glory.* The object is most excellent. The eye which they behold him with, and the light they behold him in, are rare and singular. (No such eyes, and no such light on earth, or in the lower created heavens.) And the fruits of this beholding this his glory, in this blessed way, are inexpressible. There are two eyes that believers behold Christ's glory with; faith and sight. It is the same glory of the same Jesus that is seen; it is the same man that seeth his glory: but how vastly different are these two eyes, and the two beholdings! The one is for this life, the other for the other life. The glory of Christ, as it shineth in heaven, is not for the eye of faith. Faith may take it up in the promise, and believe and wait for it; but the glory of Christ in heaven is far above the eye of faith, Rom. viii. 24, 25. And, on the other hand, the glory of Christ, as it shineth in the gospel, and as seen by faith, is not for sight, and is unspeakably below it. For as needful and useful as faith is now to believers, yet when they come to *the end of their faith, the salvation of their soul,* 1 Pet. i. 9. they have no more to do with it. There is no need of the shield of faith, when the war is ended, and the soldier of faith is made *more than a conqueror, through Christ that loved him,* Rom. viii. 37. Pictures of Christ, and love-letters from

m, and love-tokens, (the glory of the gospel, and the necesry food of faith), are no more needed when the blessed bered is present and enjoyed.

I. I would now come to speak of the first thing, *the glory Christ.* And it is with reverence and godly fear that I ould speak, and you should hear, of this great and awful eme. And what I mean to say of it, shall be under these o heads: 1. The glory of Christ as he represents God unto . 2. His glory as he represents us unto God: As he is od's only true representative to his church; and as he is the ly representative of his church unto God. Christ is both, d great is his glory in both. And this glory I would soberspeak of.

To begin with the *first* head, that Christ is the only repreitative of God unto his church: And great is his glory wein. And this glory of Christ is beheld by faith now, and eternity by sight. There are many words about this, esially in the New Testament, (where the Old Testament il on Christ's glory is taken away; and yet the New Testaent light will itself evanish also, when the Lord returns in glory, and hath his church with him where he is.) I shall me a few of them. Col. i. 15. he is called *the image of the isible God.* Heb. i. 3. he is *the brightness of his glory, and express image of his person.* Who is the image? He that *holdeth all things by the word of his power; who, when he had himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Maty on high.* Whose glory's brightness is he? whose per n's character bears he? God the Father's, who spake in the d Testament times by the prophets, and in the New Testaent times by his Son, ver. 1, 2. So in 2 Cor. iv. 6. *The ht of the knowledge of the glory of God shineth in the face* (or tion) *of Jesus Christ.* All deep words, and deep matter in em.

To prepare our way to enter on this theme, there are three ings I would lay before you.

1. That a right and sound knowledge of God is simply and solutely necessary unto true happiness, in this and in the

other world. Our Lord in this chapter, ver. 3. saith, *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* And 1 John v. 20. speaking of Christ as known, the apostle saith, *This is the true God, and eternal life.* None know the true God, none can come by eternal life, but they that know Christ. No faith, love, worship, or obedience can be performed and acted by him that knows not God. The Athenian inscription, *To the unknown God*, was ridiculous, but suitable enough for blind idolaters. This truth, of the necessity of the knowledge of God, in order to the pleasing and enjoying of him, and of his favour, is engraven on mens hearts by nature.

2. God in himself, and absolutely considered, is unknowable by men in this life, (to carry it no further now), unless he some way manifest himself to us. To this that seems to refer in 1 Tim. vi. 16. He *dwelleth in light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see. Whatsoever doth make manifest, is light*, Eph. v. 13. Yet divine light is a covering of God, Psalm civ. 1, 2. that no creature can see through; John i. 18. *No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.* This truth stands on three foundations. 1. The greatness of God, and of his glory. 2. The shortness of mens reach as creatures. And, 3. The corruption of their minds as sinners: Eph. iv. 18. *Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.* A dreadful, but true picture of that dungeon that all men by nature are born in, and must live and die in, and go through it, and from it, into outer darkness. In what way God did, and doth manifest himself and his glory unto the holy angels, and how they behold him, is quite hid from us. Though our Lord tells us, that *in heaven they do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven*, Matth. xviii. 10.; yet what this is, we know no more than we do that in Rev. xxii. 4. of the triumphant church that *shall see his face.* To come a little lower, and to speak of the first man who was made a little lower than the angels; This also is beyond our understanding how God did manifest himself unto him, and how he did behold God's glory: Though we are sure that both

were. But when sin came in, then plainly the minds of all men are so defiled and darkened, that there is a necessity that they must be taught of God that do know the Lord; and blessed be his name, that he hath promised this in the new covenant, and fulfils it to *the heirs of promise*, as they are called in Heb. vi. 17. John vi. 45. Jer. xxxi. 32, 33, 34. Yet, when the saving knowledge of God and faith are given, such is the weakness of this eye, that, on any special appearance of the glory of God, fear and amazement seizeth on their hearts. Whence that saying, so usual in old times, Judges xiii. 22. *We shall surely die, because we have seen God;* though God appeared in mercy to Manoa and his wife, and with a promise of a son to them, and a judge and saviour to Israel. Jacob had wrestled and prevailed with the angel, and was blessed by him: yet he saith with thankfulness and wonder, *I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved*, Gen. xxxii. 30. What made Isaiah to say, on his seeing of God's glory, *Wo is me, I am undone*, chap. vi. 5.? Did God threaten him, did God smite him? No; but, *mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.* "I have seen his glory, and his "spotless holiness hath been proclaimed in my ears. "Thereby I see, that my own uncleanness, and the "uncleanness of others I dwell amongst, doth greatly en-"danger me."

3. Notwithstanding all this depth of God's glory, and darkness in all mens minds by nature, since the fall of Adam; yet all men, in all ages, have been seeking out, and studying, and making to themselves, some representations of God. They know that there is a God; they quickly come to know that this God is out of their sight; and, on a little deeper thinking, they know that this invisible God is also beyond the reach of their minds and thoughts. Is there a curious student of God's works of creation, that findeth not something in the smallest of his creatures, that our understanding cannot find out? What must we think of the Former of all things? *Can any find out God to perfection?* Job xi. 7. A conviction of this depth in God, and darkness in man, seemeth to have been declared in the inscription on the altar at Athens, Acts xvii. 23. This Paul takes for his text, (if I

may so say), and makes an excellent sermon upon it. The conviction that is in mens hearts, of the depth of God, and of the darkness in themselves, hath bred a desire in all men to know somewhat more of God than they do, that they may please, and serve, and worship him, and obtain his favour. And this darkness and desire have brought forth two great plagues on the world, that are like to last as long as the world lasts, and as long as sinners live in it; two representations of God devised by men.

1*st*, The first way of men's studying to represent God unto themselves, is the more fine way of the better sort of the Heathens, and their philosophers. And that was, by framing thoughts, ideas, and contemplations of God, from the light of nature, and exercise of their reason. This way the apostle takes notice of, as a poor way, and unprofitable, Rom. i. 20. That philosopher spoke like a divine, who, when he was asked by his prince, What God was? desired a day's time to think on it. When that was granted, and done, he asked two days time to think on the question. After the two days, he asked four days. And when the king wondered at his delays, he gave this true and ingenuous answer: "The "more I think of God, the less can I tell what he is." And this will be the sure effect to all that, without the light of God's word and Spirit, do busy themselves to frame representations of God himself in their minds. The Heathens have indeed spoke and wrote many good thoughts of some of the divine attributes, which may be read with profit; and some do read them with wonder, how they came by such thoughts; and many have thought, that some of these philosophers might have seen some part of the Old Testament scriptures. Paul quotes one of them at Athens, Act xvii. 28. whom he calls *one of their own poets;* and another in Tit. i. 12. whom he calls *a prophet of their own:* yet what he quotes of this last, is a complete Greek verse of poesy; and the other but a half-verse. But their philosophers taught and wrote, both in prose or verse. Yet though we, who have the light of God's word, may make good use of these sparks of nature's light; we must not thence think, that they by their wisdom, did know God savingly; contrary

Cor. 1. 21. *The world by wisdom knew not God.* An unrounded charity to the salvation of the Heathen that never new God in Christ, is a reflection on the gospel of Christ. nd if men will coin a new gospel, and a way of saving sinners, by Jesus Christ, as only preached to the Heathen, by un, moon, and stars, contrary to the word of God, John iv. 6. and xvii. 3. Eph. ii. 12. Acts iv. 11, 12. do you know nd remember, that it is false coin. And mens coining of nother way to God than by his Son Jesus Christ, revealed in nd by the gospel, is treason against the Majesty of heaven; nd though it may deceive men on earth, it will never pass current in heaven.

2dly, The other way of mens representing God unto emselves, is by images and outward representations of God. n old abomination. It is like it was not before the deluge: r it is not named; but only violence, and lusts, and general rruption in manners, are given as the procuring causes of d's destroying the world by water. Besides, the world s but lately created, and the glory of the Creator stared ery man in the face; and that Methusalem, who died a ile before the flood, had lived some hundreds of years, ile the first man, Adam, lived. Besides, Enoch's procy, cited by Jude, ver. 14, 15. makes no mention of idola. But however it was before the flood, idolatry came ckly into the world afterwards, and is like to continue it be purged by fire. Now, what is idolatry? and ence is it that the world is so *mad upon idols*, Jer. l. 38.? latry is the worshipping of the true God by and under image or representation of God, devised by mens heads, framed by mens hands. The first command of the moral forbids the having and worshipping of any, but the true d. The second command forbids the making of any reblance or image of God, and worshipping of God by it. vine worship is that *glory that God will not give to another, ther his praise to graven images*, Isa. xlii. 8.; and that bense he is a jealous God. Worship is God's throne in the rld of angels and men; and he will admit of no rival or rtner in it. The idolaters pretend that they only honour od, and give no divine glory to the image: but the Lord

calls worshipping him by an image, *a worshipping of the creature more than the Creator*, Rom. i. 25. Now, how comes in idolatry into the world? And what keeps it up in it, since all men by their reason think, as Paul saith, all *ought to think, that the Godhead is not like unto gold, or silver, or stone graven by art or man's device?* Acts xvii. 29. The true cause of this sin's rise and reign in the world, is this. All men by nature know there is a God that made the world, and that they ought to worship him; but who he is, and what is pleasing worship to this God, they know not. They know, that if there be a God, he must not be like any creature in heaven or earth. The distance betwixt God and creatures, is, in its greatness, known only to him that can comprehend his own glorious majesty, and the emptiness of nothing creatures. And therefore we see how he speaks in Isaiah xl. 17. *All nations before him are as nothing*, (that is, pretty low; but he yet lays them lower), *and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will you liken God?* ver. 18. But though God only can comprehend the greatness of this distance betwixt God and creatures; yet all men do apprehend, that it is, and must be great. Then, when reason tells them, that this God that made all things in time, is eternal; that he is immense and unsearchable in all perfections; that he is a Spirit; every one of these names of God do stun and puzzle the man's understanding; so that all must say, as one did, Job xxxvii. 23. *Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out.* So that, in this confusion and darkness, they must (as they did, John iv. 22.) *worship they know not what;* and because *they know not God, so as to glorify him as God*, &c. *they change the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like unto a corruptible man*, &c. Rom. i. 21, 22, 23. Man, in his ignorance and sinfulness, first *thinks that God is such an one as himself*, Psal. l. 21.; and then thinks any representation of God may serve. And indeed the meanest creeping thing is an image too good for such a god. A god altogether like a sinner, is no other than *the god of this world*, the devil, 2 Cor. iv. 4. See the first gross idolatry among Israel in the wilderness, Exod. xxxii. They had heard the fiery law proclaimed dreadfully, but about forty days before; and idolatry

specially prohibited and threatened in that law: yet they had hardly the dread of that voice out of their ears, before their hearts are turned aside, their hands busied in making an idol, and they on their knees worshipping it. In ver. 1. they say, *Up, and make us gods to go before us.* What a poor god is he that is of man's making? All Israel could not make one fly or gnat; yet they are for God-making. When they had their golden calf, they said, ver. 4. *These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.* Did they not know, that, a few weeks before, they had brought that gold out of the land of Egypt, of which they had now made their idol? Did they not know, that this idol could no more go one step before, nor with them, nor after them, than a stone? And doubtless they meant to carry it, if Moses had not made them to destroy it, and drink it, ver. 20. But they had brought up their idolatrous hearts out of the land of Egypt, Ezek. xxiii. 3, 8, 19.; and they thought this a fit representation of the true God; and therefore *proclamation is made of a feast to-morrow, to the Lord, to Jehovah,* Exodus xxxii. 5. As long as God is not known by his word and Spirit, no man is secured from falling into idolatry. Let us look into the Antichristian state; and there any Christian may see, that the whole of their worship, from the beginning to the end, is a mere mass of idolatry, and wicked representations of God. Their hearts, their houses, their streets and high-ways, their temples, are all filled with idols: many false gods, as angels and saints; many wicked representations even of the divine persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Justly may it be called, as old Babylon was, *a land of graven images,* Jer. l. 38. The old Pagan, and the new Antichristian Rome, equally full of idols; only with difference in names. Heathen names laid aside, and Christian names taken up in their rooms: but the idols the same, and the idolatry the same; with the addition of a god made of bread, to be first made, then worshipped, and then eat. An abomination enough to make the natural conscience of a cannibal to keck at.

To conclude this head, about worshipping of God by images, I would say only, that it is a sin as plainly forbid in

God's word as any sin whatsoever; as fearfully punished as any sin: that it is a sin that both riseth from unworthy thoughts of God, and increaseth these unworthy thoughts. It stupifies men, and takes away their reason: Isaiah xliv. 20. *He* (the idolater) *feedeth of ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his own soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? But they that make them, are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them*, Psalm cxv. 8. The idol, and the idolater, are much alike. The idol is void of all natural life and sense, and the idolater is as void of all spiritual life and sense. Hath that man the soul and spirit of a man in him; hath he any sense of the majesty of the true and living God, who can call a log of wood, or a bit of bread, a god, and worship it? I have said the more of idolatry, because it is the sin most dishonourable to God, most destructive to the souls of men, and a dreadful stumbling-block to the Jews and Turks, who do justly abhor idols, for as blind and sottish as otherwise they be. Nor can any man wonder that they stumble at the name of Christianity, when they see the greatest part of such as profess that name, as much given to idolatry, as ever the Heathen were, either before or since Christ came into the world. This sin is also a disgrace to mankind, and a shameful defacing of that image of God in which he was first made; when a man so *debaseth himself even unto hell*, (Isa. lvii. 9.), as to worship what either his own or other mens hands have made. Yet this sin of idolatry is a demonstration, that the light of nature, and the notion of a God, (notwithstanding all the weakness, darkness, and corruption mixed with it in fallen man), is deeply and strongly rooted in mens hearts, that they will rather take up with any thing for a God, yea, make a God to themselves, rather than have none. It is no rare thing, to see an idolatrous prince, who is as proud as Lucifer, and who saith in his heart as he did, Isa. xiv. 12, 13, 14.; and who hath pride and ambition enough to desire to be lord of the whole earth: yet such a wretch as this who is not worthy to live among his fellow-mortals, will humble himself, and kneel before a proud priest, confess his sins to him, and ask, and receive pardon from him, as from a God, and worship

the work of the meanest of his subjects hands. This was the proud boast in the last age, of a confessor to a great king, "When I have my king on his knees before me, and my god "(meaning the consecrated wafer) in my hands, what can I "not do?" From such gods, such kings, and such priests, may the only true God deliver us, and all the nations on earth. But as long as the spirit of Demetrius prevaileth, Diana will not want a rich temple, and many worshippers; Acts xix. 25. *Ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.* For if false gods were not rich gods, and rich-making gods, they quickly would have neither priests, nor temples, nor worshippers. And quickly may it be, is the hearty prayer of every true Christian.

And this leads me to the point in hand, That the Lord Jesus Christ, God-man, and our Mediator, is the only true representative of God unto the church. God only makes himself savingly known to men in his Son Jesus Christ. Men that would know God savingly, worship God acceptably, and enjoy God for ever, they must seek and get all in and by Jesus Christ.

In handling of this, I would speak to two things. 1. The fitness of Christ to be God's representative to his church. 2. The glory of Christ in being so.

First, As to Christ's fitness to represent God unto men: It appears in three things.

1. In the divine dignity of his person. He is God's eternal Son, and God equal with the Father. I know that this rock, the church of Christ is built upon, is boldly struck at in these last and worst days. But we should know as well, that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*, Matth. xvi. 18. I would only say now, that that man or woman that owns the authority of the New Testament, (though Christ's Godhead shines very brightly in the Old Testament), and shall read but three first chapters, John i. Col. i. and Heb. i. and can say, that Christ is a mere man and creature, is under a judicial blindness. All that worship Christ, and call on his name in prayer, and deny him to be the true God, are guilty of idolatry. A mere creature, image and representation of God used

in worship is an idol. But the eternal Son of God, who is in his person *the image of God and the character of the Father's person*, is fit unspeakably to declare God unto men, John i. 18. He alone doth it, and none else can.

2. The Son's assuming man's nature unto his own divine person, makes him fit to represent God to men, John i. 1,—18. His being God-man, made him fit to represent God to men, and to represent men to God. God is only to be savingly known by men, as he is a God in Christ; and sinners are only accepted of God as they are in Christ. His human nature is a creature; but the Son of God that assumed and dwelleth personally in this nature, is a divine person. It is not his nature as man, but his divine person dwelling in that nature, that doth make him the only right representative and image of the invisible God unto his church.

3. Christ's being installed in the office of Mediator, makes him fit to represent God unto men. He is the *one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*, 1 Tim. ii. 5. Such as, on this account, talk of Christ's being a God by office, know neither God, nor Christ, nor his office. Our Lord Jesus Christ is God in office; and to be worshipped by his people, as clothed with it. In this office, as prophet, he represents and revealeth the mind and will of God, to be known and believed by the church; which is commanded by the Father to *hear him*, Matth. xvii. 5. As King, *all judgment is committed to the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. And he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him*, John v. 22, 23. And as Priest, as all in that office are *taken from among men, and ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that they might both offer gifts and sacrifices for sins*, Heb. v. 1.; so *the Son was consecrated for this office by an oath*, Heb. vii. 28.: and as Priest, he *must have somewhat also to offer*, Heb. viii. 3.; which offering was himself, and this he hath offered, Heb. ix. 26. and x. 5,—10. And after this offering, *he entered in*, as Priest, *into the holy place*; even *into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us*, Heb. ix. 12, 24. And there he remains, and *liveth for ever, to make intercession for us*, Heb. vii. 25. until *he shall appear the second time, without*

sin, unto salvation, Heb. ix. 28. Now, in this office Christ represents his church unto God; and in his prophetical and kingly office, he represents God unto his church. Both equally needful for our salvation, and both only performed by Jesus Christ as Mediator; who only can represent God unto us, that we may savingly know God; and represent us so to God, that we may be graciously received by him. *Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus*, Heb. iii. 1. Consider how fit he is to do all God's business with us, and all our business with God, for our salvation, and his Father's and his own glory. He is clothed with a most honourable office of Mediator, (the honour and work of which office no mere creature could bear and dispatch), furnished with all fulness for its discharge and management. This office he discharged when on earth, in our nature as man; and in the same nature, is doing what remains to be done in that office, in heaven. And this high officer, this man Jesus Christ, is *God over all, blessed for ever*, Rom. ix. 5. So that his fitness for making a true and saving representation of God to his people, is evident; but so great and glorious, that we cannot fully apprehend it by faith. We have in our Lord Jesus Christ, a Mediator between God and men, to take away the breach that sin had made between them, and to make an everlasting friendship; a Mediator so furnished for his office, that any may trust him in it. We have this Mediator in our own nature, *a partaker of flesh and blood*, as we be, Heb. ii. 14, 17.; *in all things made like unto his brethren*, that he might be the fitter for us, and that we might be more familiar with him. And this Mediator by his office, this real and true man by the taking of our nature, is God, *the only begotten of the Father*. Can any make a doubt of this truth we are upon, That the Lord Jesus Christ, God-man, Mediator, is the true, real, and only representative of God to his church?

So much for this first head.

Secondly, What is Christ's glory, in being God's representative to his church? Herein he is exceedingly exalted. How greatly is it expressed, Eph. i. 20,—23. and in Phil. ii.

6,—11.? and how hard to think suitably of them? I shall only touch at three particulars in it.

1. It is glory to Jesus Christ, that all the saving discoveries of God are made to men in and by him: 2 Cor. iv. 6. *The light of the knowledge of the glory of God shineth to men, in the face of Jesus Christ.* Till a man know Jesus Christ, he knows not God; nay, he hath not a God: Eph. ii. 12. They that are without Christ, are *without God in the world*: "Ye were "Atheists," (so is the Greek word); though the Ephesians, to whom he writes, had been great idolaters, and had gods and goddesses more than were worth having, Acts xix.

2. Great is Christ's glory in this, that all the worship that is given to God, if right, and as it is commanded, is given to God in and by Jesus Christ. *No coming to the Father, but by him*, John xiv. 6. If we *believe in God*, we must *also believe on him*, chap. xiv. 1. *Through him we believe on God*, 1 Peter i. 21. If *we believe on him, we believe not on him* (only or alone), *but on him that sent him. And he that seeth him, seeth him that sent him*, John xii. 44, 45. If we pray, we must do it *in Christ's name*, chap. xiv. 13, 14. and xvi. 23, 24. Yea, *whatsoever we do, whether in word or deed, must all be done in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him*: Col. iii. 17. All our gospel-sacrifices are to be offered to God by him, Heb. xiii. 15. Now, consider how great a person this must be, as the apostle argues about his type, Melchisedec, in Heb. vii. 1,—4. And he is there exalting that unknown man's priesthood above the Levitical, in this, that Abraham, Levi's great-grandfather, gave the tenth of the spoils to him. How much greater is Jesus Christ, of whom Melchisedec was but a type and shadow, to whom we must not only give a tenth, but all, of that worship and service we pay and owe to God?

3. All the mercy, favour, and bounty of God to men, comes to us in and by Jesus Christ. No *spiritual blessings in heavenly things* doth God *bless us with*, but in *Jesus Christ*, Eph. i. 3.

Application. All the use of this doctrine I shall at this time make, is in one warning; which I wish may be as well

taken, as it is needful, both to me to give it, and to you to take it. And it is this, That the secret moth and poison in many people's religion is, that it is not Christianity. *God* out of Christ *is a consuming fire;* God not worshipped in Christ, is an idol; all hopes of acceptance out of Christ, are vain dreams; a heaven out of Christ, is little better than the Turks paradise. How sad is it; how visible is it, and common, that many men and women do pray every day, and hear every day, and would fain know God rightly, and worship him acceptably; and, if we might believe their words and profession, they know a great deal of God, and serve him not a little; when, in the mean time, Jesus Christ, as the only glass in and by which the true God and his glory is to be known and adored, is not minded by them? They have no sense, no experience of it, no conviction of the necessity of Christ's representing an invisible, incomprehensible God, unto them; they make no essays to know God in and by this only right way. Hence is it, that there is so much of that that bears the name of *religion*, that not only men may carry to hell with them, but that pusheth them into hell. Hence is it, that so many have a form of godliness, who are fatal strangers to its power. Is it not sad, to see and hear men, who bear the name of Christians, playing the philosophers about God's nature and attributes, while in the mean time they are utter, yea contented strangers, unto this only true representation of God unto men in his Son Jesus Christ? All I shall say now, is to glance at one scripture, in 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4, 6. *If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost*, I cannot deny, would the apostle say, but that, for all the plainness and closeness of our preaching, of which in ver. 2. yet our gospel is hid; but it is so to a lost company. But how comes it, that, under such preaching as Paul's, the gospel is hid from any that hear it? This he answers, ver. 4. wherein he names two causes concurring, one sad effect flowing from these causes, and destruction consequent on the effect. The causes are, unbelief in their hearts, and Satan's working with it, and securing of it. The sinner is blind by nature, his blindness grows by the abused light of the gospel, and the devil spreads a thick vail over their blind

eyes, that let gospel-light shine by an apostle, no ray, no beam shall dart in upon them. Now, what is the effect of this double-blinding? What doth Satan design in his pains on unbelievers? What is he afraid of, and studies to prevent? It is, *lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* As if the apostle had said, "The devil, in his diligence to keep sinners in the dark, thinks and knows, that if ever one beam of the glory of Christ in the gospel comes in to sinners hearts, they are lost to him, and saved to Jesus Christ." O that sinners knew this, as well as the devil doth? But why hath not this busy devil the same power on all? How came any to have their eyes opened to see? To this he answers, in ver. 6. *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.* Observe, that the apostle, in speaking of the causes of the perdition of unbelievers, names their own blindness and unbelief, and Satan's activity; but as to the salvation of believers, he ascribes it solely unto the grace of God, and its power and freedom; without which Satan would prevail on all, as he doth on many. But, for as blind as unbelievers are, and for as diligent and powerful as the devil is, God, that commanded light in the first creation, did so to us, and this light so commanded, gave us the *knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ*, by which we are saved. There are many glorious truths, that shine with some beams of light into the minds of natural men, so as that they are convinced of them, fall in love with them, and make profession of them; but never is a sinner thoroughly changed and converted to God, nor rescued from Satan and the power of darkness, till this light, this knowledge, this glory of God in the face of Christ, be given by this great Commander and Creator. Paul himself, while an unbeliever, had the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the works of creation and providence, as a man of sense and reason; he had the knowledge of the glory of God in the law, as a zealous Jew; but the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, he never had, till *it pleased God to call him by his grace, and to reveal his Son in him*, Gal. i. 15, 16. And let me tell you, that unless you

have seen more of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and in God's way of saving sinners by him, than ever you saw of his glory in his works of creation and providence (in both which, not a little of his glory shineth) the Lord hath not yet dealt with you, as he doth with them he saveth. The right saving knowledge of God centres in this one person, Jesus Christ. See how the apostle prayeth, Col. ii. 2, 3. *That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* So that all who would be enriched with true wisdom, and the saving knowledge of God, must by faith dig in Christ, and find them.

SERMON X.

JOHN xvii. 24.

Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

THIS great subject, the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he hath received of his Father, is that which his people see somewhat of here by faith, Heb. ii. 9. and are called to the hope of full beholding of it hereafter, when this prayer of our Lord shall be fully answered. It is so deep a theme, that it is not easy to enter upon it, but impossible to declare the thing plentifully as it is. All I mean to speak on it, I shall confine to two heads; the glory of Christ, as representing God unto us; and his glory, as representing us to God. In the first, he represents God unto us, to our saving knowing of God: in the other, he represents us to God, unto our saving acceptance with God. I began to speak of the former last day, and did proceed to it by these three steps:

1. That the true knowledge of God is simply needful for man's happiness, both in this and the next life. 2. That God in himself is incomprehensible, unbeholdable, unknowable, unless he is pleased to make himself some way known to men. 3. That yet men in all ages have been still framing representations of God in their own minds. A little of nature's light remains, and of the ruins of that estate God made man at first in; but so defiled and mixed with the darkness brought on men by the fall, that natural light and sinful darkness, mixed together, are but like the chaos in the beginning of the creation, Gen. i. 2. So that we may apply that to this case of mens inquiring after God, in Eccl. vii. 29. *Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright: but they have sought out many inventions.* A man can think of nothing, but in and by that thought there is some idea or representation of it made in his mind. When we think of our own souls, (by which we do think), how dark is our idea of them? But when we begin to think of creatures higher and nobler than ourselves, as angels are, what a dark idea do we frame of them? When we say they are spirits, what know we what a spirit is? When we say a spirit is an intelligent being, free of matter; how far is this from planting a just representation in our minds of those noble creatures? If we raise our thoughts above all creatures, unto the perfect Former of all things, the great JEHOVAH; every thought of him, every name and perfection of his, swallows us up; as Job xxxvii. 19. *Teach us what we shall say unto him; for we cannot order our speech* (or our thoughts) *to him by reason of darkness.* Our own light in us, is but darkness; and the infiniteness of his light and glory, is as darkness to us. *Shall it be told him that I speak? If a man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up,* ver. 20. If a man know, either who he is that speaketh, what he either speaks or thinks, or who he is that is spoke or thought of. The world hath been striving, either by their wisdom to know God, 1 Cor. i. 21. or in their folly to represent an invisible God to their bodily senses. And this last hath filled so great a part of the earth with idols; an old abomination, which, it may be, will continue till this earth be purged by the last fire. And these things led me to the only relief in this dis-

mal state of mankind, as to the right and saving knowledge of God; that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, clothed with man's nature, and with the office of Mediator between God and men, is the only true representative of God to men. That he is such, and of his glory in being so, I have spoke somewhat; and shall enter upon the use we should make of him, as the representative of God unto his church, after I have given you a little account of the gradual rising of this light in and unto the church.

When our first parents had sinned, and were ashamed of themselves, and afraid of God, and ignorantly thought to hide themselves from him, he calls them to his bar, arraigns them for their sin; and when they had no reason to expect any thing but present judgment and execution, instead of that, the Lord, in a threatening against the serpent, brings forth the first promise of salvation by Jesus Christ, called there *the seed of the woman;* who, though he should suffer by the serpent, should yet *bruise his head,* Gen. iii. 15. In the faith of this, and it may be of other explanations of it not recorded, the believing fathers before the flood lived and died. And Abel and Enoch are noted, Heb. xi. 4, 5. the one a martyr, the other translated to heaven. And Noah, before, in, and after the flood, ver. 7. is called *an heir of the righteousness which is by faith:* which none but a believer is. No righteousness is by faith, but that that hath both the Lord our righteousness in it, the light of God's word to discover him and it, and a promise of the covenant to warrant faith's apprehending of it. If we go on to the patriarch Abraham, we find the light growing more bright, especially if we read Gen. xii. 14, 15, 17, &c. with Paul's comments on them, in Rom. iv. in Gal. iii. and iv. and in Heb. xi. 8,—20. and what our Lord said of Abraham in John viii. 39, 40, 56, 58. Who can read these, and not be persuaded, that Abraham knew the Son of God, and God in him, and justification and salvation by him? Let us next take a view of the church-state which the God of Israel brought his people into; first, in a more transient manner in the wilderness, and thereafter fixed them in it in Canaan. In this state, we find that the tabernacle and temple, their ordinances, priests, and sacrifices, and all their ceremonies, were

all but types and shadows of Jesus Christ, Heb. ix. and x. There were many things in that dispensation that had some appearance and semblance of idolatry; but there was none in it, for two reasons. 1. Because they were all of God's own appointment. 2. Because they were instituted on purpose to prefigure the Messiah to come. If therefore any of Israel had devised of his own head a worship of this sort, then that man had been as guilty of transgressing the second command, *Thou shalt not make unto thyself any likeness*, &c. as if he had served Baalim. And because they were all types and shadows of Christ, and of the good things to come by him; therefore if any church or person, now after the substance is come, and the shadows are gone, should attempt to bring Christians under the Levitical dispensation of the Old Testament church, they might be justly called *Antichristians, and deniers that Christ is come in the flesh*, 1 John iv. 3. Come we to the prophets, David in the Psalms, Isaiah, and all the prophets, we find a fair dawning of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, wrought in their hearts by the Spirit of God, and shining in their ministry to the church. This is so plain, that it need not be insisted on; and so full, that it would be too great a digression to insist on it as it deserves. We find Stephen, Acts vii. and Paul, Acts xiii. preaching Christ by such a narration; warrant enough for this small account. Let us now go forward to Christ's coming into the world. The angels proclaim him, a *born Saviour, Christ the Lord*, Luke ii. 11. Old dying Simeon calls him, when a babe in arms, *God's salvation, and the light of the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel*, ver. 30, 31, 32. Yea, Elizabeth calls him, when in the womb, *My Lord*, Luke i. 43. What a great anointing of the Holy Ghost was on this good woman, and how strong was her faith in Christ? When he is to be made manifest to Israel, John Baptist proclaims him to be *the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world; to be the baptizer with the Holy Ghost; to be the Son of God;* and that *all grace is received out of his fulness*, John i. 15,—34. When he is baptized, what a glorious testimony is given from heaven to him, Matth. iii. 17.? When he lived on the earth, and went about doing good, all that knew him, paid him divine worship, in faith, and

love, and prayer, and obedience; and were never checked for it; as Peter did Cornelius, Acts x. 26.; and the angel, John the divine, twice, Rev. xix. 10. and xxii. 9. Yea, when he was dying, one saw him to be God, and dealt with him by faith for eternal life: the rarest faith in all the scriptures. When dead, and supposed by Mary Magdalene to be still so, she called him, *My Lord*, John xx. 13. Thomas calls him when risen, *My Lord and my God*, John xx. 28. Yea, when he had *led them out as far as to Bethany, and had lift up his hands and blessed them; and while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and was carried up into heaven;* (a blessed parting; and there will be shortly as blessed a meeting again); *they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem, with great joy*, Luke xxiv. 50, 51, 52, 53. Strange joy! when, at the tidings of Christ's leaving them, *sorrow had filled their hearts*, John xvi. 6. But, now their Lord had done all his work on earth, and was received up into glory, they worshipped him joyfully still; knowing, that though now no more could they worship him as they did, when he was with them, with the help of that bodily presence of Christ with them, and with that sight they had of him by the eyes of their bodies terminated on his visible appearance; yet by faith, and with joy from that faith, they worshipped him still. But when Christ was not only ascended into heaven, but had sent down the promise of the Father, his Holy Spirit, upon the infant Christian church, Acts ii. *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*, shone out as the sun in its strength. All believers, all preachers, all ordinances, were filled with Christ's glory. In this gospel-temple, did *every one*, every thing, *speak of his glory;* as the word is Psal. xxix. 9. All divine worship was given to him, and to God by him; all grace dispensed by him. And thus it will be until his coming again. While God hath a church on earth, it is *gathered together in Christ's name; built* on Christ as the rock and foundation, 1 Cor. iii. 10, 11.; *grows up in him*, and on him, Eph. ii. 20, 21, 22. 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.; worships him, and the Father in him and by him; is fed and nourished by his Spirit, and the influence thereof, until that blessed state it is to be brought to at the last *appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ*, Tit. ii. 13.

Where then can a man find God, but in this man Jesus Christ, *in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead*, really, substantially, and eternally? The context hath two things in it. 1. A warning against seduction, ver. 8, 18, 19. Their and our danger lay in two things, that then were, and to this day are, the chief springs of apostasy from Christ, and *the simplicity that is in him*, as 2 Cor. xi. 3. The one is, adhering to the Old Testament ordinances and ceremonies, antiquated by Christ, the end and substance of them all. The other is, man's reason, wisdom and philosophy; which never could, nor can, find out God, so as to direct men to know God savingly, and to worship God acceptably, 1 Cor. i. 21. And therefore, by its poor principles, and *beggarly elements*, (as Gal. iv. 9.), this wisdom of man rebels against the saving wisdom of God in his Son Jesus Christ; and doth but *puff up men by their fleshly mind*, Col. ii. 18. And from those two cursed springs, all the heresies, apostasies, and the grand Antichristian defection, have evidently flowed.

2. In the context we have the privileges of Christians by Christ, that should endear him to them, and engage them to that stedfastness in the faith which he had exhorted them to in ver. 5, 6, 7. Those privileges are many and great. The Christian is *complete in him*, ver. 10. and needs not hunt after any good out of him. All is to be found in Christ, and in him only. He is *circumcised in him*, that is, sanctified, ver. 11. He is *buried with Christ, and risen again*, ver. 12.; made to die to sin, and to live to God. He is *quickened with Christ*, ver. 13. and *forgiven*. All the Christian's enemies conquered, the law cancelled, and the devil overcome, and triumphed over by Christ, at and by his lowest, ver. 14, 15.

Now, to come to the APPLICATION of this doctrine so oft named, That the Lord Jesus Christ, God-man, Mediator, is the only true representative of God unto the church: There are three exhortations I would give from it. 1. Study God in Christ. 2. Content yourselves with this knowledge of God in Christ. 3. Use and improve the knowledge of God you have in and by Jesus Christ.

Exhort. 1. Study God in Christ. You must know God, if

ye be saved. You cannot know him, but as he reveals himself; he reveals himself no other way but in Christ, so as to be savingly known. There are four books (if I may so call them) that many use in their studying to know God; but they are, and will be but poor scholars, if they have not better, and fitter, and plainer books. 1. Some will study an absolute God; God as in himself. An absolute God is a pit, and an abyss, that all that go near it, fall into it, and will be destroyed. It was a bold word of blessed Luther, "Let hypocrites "and unbelievers do as they please, I will have nothing to do "with an absolute God." God as in his Son, God as in covenant with us in his Son, God as clothed with grace and mercy, shining in his promises in Christ, is the God we must study to know; and when by his grace we attain it, we may glory humbly in it: Jer. ix. 24. *Let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.* 2. Some study God in his works. And much of his glory shineth therein, and we ought to observe it. But what is all the fruit of this alone! Only to *render men inexcusable*, Rom. i. 20. This light of the knowledge of the glory of God, is both dim and cold light. It hath no heat nor power in it. Never did a man come by the saving knowledge of God by the study of the book of creation and providence, though a true Christian may both study and profit much by it, when he *hath known God, or rather is known of God*, Gal. iv. 9. 3. Some study to know God in his holy law. And in it is a glorious discovery of God. But it is of a holy, just, sin-hating, sin-forbidding, sin-threatening God. Here he is seen as a terrible judge. No man ever did, or can know God savingly, in bare law-light. Only God can be savingly known in that representation of him wherein he is manifested as a saving God; and that is, only in his Son Jesus Christ. 4. Some study to know God in and by his ordinances. Precious appointments of God, much to be valued and used by us; and their profit great, when blessed by their appointer, and when used by us in the right manner. But we must know, that as the virtue of all the Old Testament ordinances

lay in their relation to, and shadowing forth the Messiah then to come; so all the virtue of New Testament ordinances lieth in their relation to, and shewing forth of Christ come. If therefore a man now shall study to know God savingly in and by the greater light of the gospel-appointments, without regard to Christ's interest in them, that man will as surely perish in ignorance of God, as a carnal Jew, uncircumcised in heart; as Jer. ix. 26. Rom. ii. 20, 29. Phil. iii. 3.

But, above all these, if you would know God savingly, study to know him in and by that only saving representation he hath made of himself in his Son.

1. For here it is you have the only true, and new place to find God in. Job in his distress said, *O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat, or throne!* Job xxiii. 3. He is only to be found in Christ. God dwelleth in Christ, Col. ii. 9. There, and there only, you must seek him, and find him, and know him savingly; and *acquaint yourselves with him, and be at peace*, Job xxii. 21. There is no creature, no part of the work of God's hands, that is so nearly related to God, as the nature of the man Christ, assumed by the divine person of *the Word, the only begotten of the Father*. This is *the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man*, Heb. viii. 2. This is *the new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh*, Heb. x. 20. And this is the only *way to the holiest*, ver. 19. The devil, Christ's great enemy, hath done much to darken and disgrace this way to the world; on the one hand, by the gross idolatry of Antichrist, wherein a vain show is made, by images of Christ, and of his flesh, and sufferings in it; all obscuring and perverting of Christ as the ordinance of God for our salvation. On the other hand, when men by their reason see the vanity of this Popish pageant and puppet-shew, into which Antichrist hath turned the true gospel-representation of Christ, Satan hath brought in a mystical and metaphysical gospel, on the pretence of greater spirituality; wherein the flesh of Christ, and his saving performances in that flesh, are either hid, or turned into allegories, and mysteries, and notions, that have no room but in their vain minds that hatch them, and are quite unprofitable to them that harbour

and hug them. But let Christians beware of both, as of ways of perdition; and by faith fix on the flesh of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, which was given by him *for the life of the world*, John vi. 51. In this tabernacle of his body we by faith see God the Son personally dwelling, and by the same faith see the Father dwelling in the Son. And thus only do we savingly know God.

2. In Christ only we have the new names and relations of God, in and by which God only can be savingly known. When God sent Moses to Israel, and to Pharaoh, to bring Israel out of Egypt, Moses saith to the Lord, Exod. iii. 13. *If they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?* (And what a deep answer is given to this bold question, ver. 14.?) So may we, What is that name and relation of God that he only can be savingly known by? It is easily answered, God can only be savingly known in and by that saving name by which he makes himself known; and that is his name in Christ. The Lord said to Israel in Exod. xxiii. 21. *Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not: for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him.* And this awful word about Christ, the angel of the covenant, that he will not pardon refusers of him, is but the same we have in Heb. xii. 25. But all the saving names and relations of God unto us, are all in and from his names in Christ, and relations to Christ. He is Christ's God and Father, and so ours, John xx. 17. But more of those anon.

So much for the first exhortation, Study God in Christ.

Exhort. 2. Learn to be content with the knowledge of God in Christ. Seek no more knowledge of God, seek no other knowledge of God, save in Christ. Ask not Philip's question; or if you do, take Christ's answer to it, and seek no other, John xiv. 7, 8, 9. Christ had told them, that *they knew his Father, and had seen him.* Philip, not understanding this, *saith unto him, Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.* "Thou "hast told us much of thy Father, of his love to us, and of "his mercy in sending thee to save us; Lord, give us but "one sight of the Father, and we will ask no more." To this Christ answers, *Have I been so long time with you,* (and three or four years was no long time, but that one day of

being with Christ was a vast mercy), *and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?* He saith not, "Have I been so long time "with you, and hast thou not yet known the Father?" (as he told the unbelieving Jews, John viii. 19. *Ye neither know me, nor my Father;* and chap. xvi. 3. *They have neither known the Father nor me;*) but, *Hast thou not known me?* "You do "know the Father, because you know me; though you do "not know so distinctly that you do know him." Therefore Christ adds, *He that seeth me, hath seen the Father;* as John xii. 45. *He that seeth me, seeth him that sent me.* "But thou, "Philip, hast seen me, both with thy bodily eye, and with the "eye of faith," (as this same Philip saith to Nathanael, John i. 45. *We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write.* "He hath been long promised by God, "long looked for by Israel; now he is come, and we have "found him; *Come and see.*)" *How sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?* "If thou truly believest in me, this thou "must believe, and dost believe." And to this way of believing he exhorts him, ver. 11. It is no easy thing to hold a strait rein on an inquisitive mind, and to confine all our knowledge of God's glory unto that that shineth in the face and person of Jesus Christ. There is enough there to busy us happily in time, and to eternity; and no good can be got in transgressing this land-mark. If men go but one step in studying God out of Christ, they wander immediately, and they do wander dangerously; as every man may feel in himself, and see it visibly in many others.

Exhort. 3. Use and improve this representation of God in Christ. It is our greatest privilege to have it; and our greatest care and diligence should be used in the improvement of it; and our greatest profit comes to us by that improvement. This I would insist upon in these particulars:—

1. Improve this representation of God in Christ for fixing and determining your spirits, in all your thoughts of God. There must be thoughts of God. His people are called *thinkers on his name*, Mal. iii. 16. On the contrary, of the wicked it is said, Psalm x. 4. *God is not in all his thoughts.*

There are two thoughts about God in Christ, that I am afraid some deceive themselves by. 1. Some think that they do know God in Christ, when they know that Christ is God. This is indeed absolutely needful to salvation. But it is not all. A notional assent unto this truth, that shineth so brightly in every page of the New Testament, may be in an ungodly man. The devil knows, and believes it, Mark v. 7.; and he only puts a wicked *if* upon it, in his tempting of Christ, Matth. iv. 3. 2. Some think they know God in Christ, when they know that Christ only can reveal God unto men, Matth. xi. 27. and John i. 18. This is indeed a proper work for Christ only; but that pertains to his prophetic office. But we must go further; not only to believe that Jesus Christ is true God, and the only true and effectual teacher of the knowledge of God; but that all the right knowledge we have, or can have of God, is of God as he is in Jesus Christ. What Paul resolved on in his office, (and it may be that he meant more than his way in his office of apostleship), you must take up in all your religion: 1 Cor. ii. 2. *I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* And if we had more ministers of Paul's spirit in their preaching, we should see more of Christianity in the people's religion. But when some ministers preach, as if they had taken up the reverse of Paul's determination, even to know, and to make known any thing, every thing, save Christ and him crucified; is it any wonder, if many of their hearers may say, as they did about the Holy Ghost, and his dispensation, Acts xix. 2. *We have not so much as heard whether there be any Jesus Christ, and that crucified?* And such may justly say also of the Spirit, *We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost:* for the Spirit is received only by believers on Christ, John vii. 39.; and *by the hearing of faith, and not by the works of the law,* Gal. iii. 2.

2. Improve this representation of God in Christ, in your dealing with him for eternal life. Whoever would be saved, must have some heart-dealings with God about it, and for it. You know it is *the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord,* Rom. vi. 23. Any way, every way of dealing with God for

salvation, will not succeed. There is one special, and the only right way; and that is with God in Christ. Can you deal with God as the Creator of the world, and as a Lawgiver? Unless God had revealed himself in Christ, no sinner durst lift up his face before God's throne, to beg eternal life, or to expect it.

3. Improve this representation of God in Christ, in all your worshipping of God. The word is *the word of Christ*, Col. iii. 16. We pray; but how? We must *pray in Christ's name, and ask, whatever we ask of the Father, in Christ's name*, John xiv. 13, 14. and xvi. 23, 24. The God that the apostle prayed to, is *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named*, Eph. iii. 14, 15.; *and to him he gives glory by Christ Jesus*, ver. 20, 21. O that men did know, that to worship God out of Christ, is to *worship they know not what!* as Christ saith in John iv. 22. But *we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.* Out of them the Messias cometh, and salvation by him; and in him God is savingly known, and knowingly worshipped.

4. Let all Christians improve this doctrine in their spiritual exercise, and in the actings of the graces of the Spirit. All those graces are from God in Christ, and dispensed and enlivened by the Spirit of grace. And they are (if you take the expression rightly) as so many distinct members and powers of the new man, whereby it acts on its original. I would name several of them, and shew of what use this representation of God in Christ is in their acting.

1*st*, Faith. We *by Christ believe in God, who raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory*, 1 Pet. i. 21. Faith is justly called the fundamental, radical grace in the new creature; because it is that grace whereby he is built on Christ the foundation, and taketh root in Christ, in whom is all the Christian's life, sap, and fatness. There are two acts of faith I would speak of; an act of faith for peace, and an act of faith for supply.

(1.) Faith acts for peace. There is a sad quarrel betwixt God and us by sin, which must be taken away, or no peace can be. God hath provided the way; Christ hath made the

way, yea, is become the way; the gospel reveals it, and faith improves and useth it. I shall give you four names of God in Christ, which you will know and use, if you ever know what believing is. 1. The name of God is *love to sinners*, John iii. 16. 1 John iv. 8, 9, 10, 16. It is impossible that a sinner can act any dependence on God for salvation, unless there be some manifestation of his name, as love. Whenever any beam of this love darts in upon a poor sinner, the man begins to live and hope immediately. I mean not, that every one should believe this proposition, That God loves me; but only, that God hath a wonderful great love to save sinners, which he hath proved in giving his own Son to be a Saviour; that this love runs out to men in and by Jesus Christ; and all that would have it for themselves, should strive to get near to this Sun, that when its light and heat is seen and felt, they may be saved. 2. Another name of God, that faith acts on, is God *with his redeeming blood.* Stumble not at the phrase; it is that of the Holy Ghost, Acts xx. 28. When the apostle is counting the privileges of Christians under the New Testament, see how he riseth, Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24. *Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels;* (all beyond what the Old Testament church was brought to); *to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.* But is it not terrible to be brought to *God the Judge of all?* No; for ye are come *to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.* As if the apostle had said, "Fear not to *come to God the Judge of all*, when ye see "*Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant*, and his blood, that "sealed and confirmed that covenant, so near to God. God "the Judge is your friend, and will absolve you; and *the blood* "*of the covenant* (as it is called, Heb. xiii. 20.) will speak "better things for you, and speak louder for your salvation, "than the guilt of sin, and the thunders of the law, can "speak against you." And never had a sinner been saved, if the voice of Christ's blood had been outcried by any voice from heaven, or earth, or hell. 3. Another name of God in

Christ, is, he is *a God that justifies the ungodly*, Rom. iv. 5. Papists, and others, in their pretended zeal for holiness and good works, do either desire that this name of God were not in the Bible, or the true sense of it were taken out of the church. It is this plainly: That as no man needs the blessing of justification, but a sinner and an ungodly man; so whenever God gives this blessing, he gives it freely to a man that is ungodly till he get it. And when a sinner pleads for it, he doth plead as guilty and ungodly. He begs it of God as an alms of free grace; the Lord gives it as such; and he that gets it, holds it, and praiseth for it, as such an alms of mere grace. *God be merciful to me the sinner*, said the justified publican: Let the unjustified Pharisee boast of his fastings, prayers, and good works, Luke xviii. 9—14. 4. *The way by which peace with God is brought about in and by Jesus Christ*, is a name of God in Christ that faith hath much to do with. When God proclaimed his name to Moses, Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6, 7. (Moses had earnestly desired to see the Lord's glory, God promiseth it graciously, chap. xxxiii. 18, 19.): Let us read this glorious proclamation: *And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands* (*of generations*, as Exod. xx. 6. and Psalm cv. 8.) *forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the childrens children, unto the third and to the fourth generation:* Here was much of the glory of God's grace discovered; and Moses made good use of it, ver. 8, 9. But yet how dark and dreadful was this name! how hard to understand it! Here is both grace in pardoning sin, and justice in visiting for sin. By this name we cannot tell when, and whom God will pardon; and when, and whom he will not clear; for all are guilty. By this name we cannot tell how God can do both; how he can pardon, and yet not clear the guilty; how he can pardon without reflecting on his justice; or how he can punish iniquity, and not reflect on his grace and mercy. In chap. xxxiii. 19. the Lord saith, *I will make all my goodness* (or beauty and glory) *pass before thee.* Yet was it short of

New Testament light: for the bright gospel-name of God in Christ resolves sweetly this riddle, Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26. In Christ only *mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other*, as Psalm lxxxv. 10. And by this meeting and kiss, we are saved; and when we see it by faith, we are comforted. By these, God's glorious names of justice and mercy kiss one another, and do kiss and save the believer; and the believer by faith kisseth the Son of God, as Psalm ii. 12.; and then the Father, as a reconciled God, in him. I would speak somewhat of this from two scriptures, both deep in themselves, and yet full of light and comfort to believers. One in 2 Cor. v. 19, 20, 21. In this place, the apostles tells us what his gospel was, as committed to him, and preached by him. It was this good news, That *God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself*, (But *the world lieth in wickedness*, 1 John v. 19. and God is holy, and a hater of wickedness; how then can such a God as he is, be reconciled to such a world as this is?), *not imputing their trespasses unto them.* God out of Christ judgeth and condemneth the sinful world for their trespasses; and this is the glory of his justice. But God in Christ does not impute their trespasses unto them; and this is the glory of his grace. But how can this be? The world is guilty; trespasses they have committed; sin is not a transient act, no more to be heard after it is committed; but as it is in us, it flows from a depraved sinful nature, and contracts a permanent guilt, binding us over unto eternal vengeance, and is only removeable and dissolved by pardoning grace. The nature of God, and his law, requireth that this high crime of sin be either avenged on us, or satisfied for by us, or by another for us. The just revenge of sin, is the eternal ruin of the sinner; and satisfaction to justice for sin, is eternally beyond the power of the sinner, or of any creature whatsoever. How then can God be just, and not impute sin to the sinner? It is answered in ver. 21. *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* The sinless Son of God in man's nature, is by God made sin for us, that the sinful sons and daughters of men may be made the righteousness of God in him. How can

this be; that one that is sinless is made sin, and that such as are true and real sinners are made righteous, yea, made the righteousness of God in him that was made sin; and they are made thus righteous, by his being thus made sin? Is not this to depress Christ too low, and to exalt believers too high? No; it depresseth Christ no lower than his Father did lay him for our salvation, and exalteth believers no higher than saving grace designed them. How is he made sin? By the bearing of, and being a propitiation for sin. Sin was imputed to him: not his own; for he had none, and could not have been our Saviour if he had had any: Heb. vii. 26. *For such an High-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.* But the iniquity of all his flock was laid on him, Isa. liii. 6.; for this was he bruised by law and justice, and by these stripes are we healed, Isa. liii. 5. Christ was sinless in himself, and only made sin for us. We are sinners in ourselves, and far from, and void of all righteousness in ourselves, yet by grace are made the righteousness of God in him; not, nor never in ourselves. The sanctified believer is made truly holy in himself, by Christ's holiness imparted to him by the Spirit of Christ. The glorified are made perfectly holy. But neither of them are made sanctification or righteousness for themselves, or for others. The glory of this is Christ's crown and property, 1 Cor. i. 30. and the blessing of it is the glory and salvation of his people. Another scripture, among many to this purpose, is in Gal. iii. 13, 14. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,* (a great mercy; but how?), *being made curse for us:* (How proves he it?): *for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree;* (taken from Deut. xxi. 23. *For he that is hanged,* (*i. e.* on a tree, as ver. 22.), *is accursed of God,* or *the curse of God:* Hanging to death on a tree, was named in the law an accursed death, (though it probably be one of the easiest ways of putting malefactors to death, as it is generally used in Christian kingdoms), on the account of one Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who was to die this way:— *that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.* What is the blessing of Abraham? It is that that comes to men by faith in Christ: Gal. iii. 9. *So then they*

which be of faith, are blessed with faithful (or believing) *Abraham.* Both are blessed with the same blessing, and by the same Blesser, and in the same way of believing in Christ. These two scriptures (as Christ himself was) have been a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, and as signs to be spoke against. But can any say or think, that the inspired writer of them did not highly honour his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, or that he did not wisely consult the edification of the church, in his using these words? No; no mere man excelled him in both. Zeal for Christ's glory, and love to sinners salvation, did eat him up. If we rank these words amongst *some of the things that are hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction,* 2 Peter iii. 16.; yet surely they are most needful to be understood, are capable of a very good meaning, and are made very plain unto many. Sin against God, and the curse of God for sin, are the worst things in this and the other world. Sin, and the curse for it, are inseparable. If sin be committed, it is imputed, and the curse follows in course of law. If the curse fall on a man, sin did precede it, and deserve it. Yea, when our Saviour bore our sin by imputation, the curse must follow that charge. But observe the dialect of the Holy Ghost in these two scriptures, and see what provision is made for the honour of Christ in this way of speaking, as well as for our peace and salvation in what is spoken. 1. Christ is said to be *made sin.* This no sinner was, or can be. When angels fell, they were made sinners, but not made sin. So of Adam, when he sinned, he became a sinner, and a sin and death-conveying head to himself, and to all his natural posterity; but he did not become sin, though he came nearer it than ever any other sinner did or can. When we sin, (and, alas! when do we not sin?) we were sinners by nature, before we commit actual sin; but by sinning we only become greater sinners, and are not made sin. *Jeroboam did sin, and made Israel to sin,* 1 Kings xiv. 16. The idols he set up, *became a sin,* 1 Kings xii. 30. But neither he, nor they were made sin. So Christ is said to be *made a curse.* And this is not to be said properly of any, but Christ. A sinner unpardoned hath the curse lying on

him, and he is under it, as Gal. iii. 10.; but he is not made a curse. 2. Christ is said to be *made sin by God.* All sinners are made such by Satan and themselves. God makes no sinners; but to save them, he makes his Son to be sin. So Christ was made a curse, and that by God too. He that laid sin on him, laid the curse also. 3. Christ is *made sin and a curse for others.* So it is in both places, *for us.* A proper sinner hath both his own sin charged on him, and God's curse laid on him, for himself. He hath none to blame but himself; Hosea xiii. 9. The sin is committed by himself, charged on himself, and punishment lights on himself. All quite contrary to God's way in dealing with his Son. All the charge on him was for others. 4. Christ's sinlessness and blessedness in himself is expressed in 2 Cor. v. 21. and hinted in Gal. iii. 13, 14. He knew no sin, yet is made sin. He was the great blessing of his church, yet is made a curse for it. Lastly, Observe the fruit, design, and effect of this marvellous way of God's making of Christ. He is made sin, that we might be made righteousness. That imputed righteousness in which believers stand before God, is the fruit of Christ's being made sin for them. Our blessing we have, springs out of Christ's being made a curse for us.

So much for the grace of faith, and its acting for peace with God. Whenever you are in good earnest in dealing with God for his favour, and reconciliation with him, one or more of these names of God in Christ, *God as love, God with his redeeming blood, God that justifies the ungodly, God making his Son to be sin and a curse for his people;* I say, some of these names of God must either be your anchor-ground, or you will perish in the sea and storm of your sin, and of God's wrath and curse. I know, that while men are secure, (as the most are) and know not what God, nor sin, nor conscience are, they may either deride them, or wantonly talk *pro* and *con* of these sacred things of God: but I can assure you of this, that if ever (and woe to you, if you never felt) the terrors of God, and the power of his law, break in upon your awakened consciences; if you ever think in earnest of death and judgment, you must have your recourse unto God in Christ, or perish

eternally. No refuge but in him, Heb. vi. 18, 19.; no hope but from him, and on him.

2. There is an act and exercise of faith for supply. When a sinner is made by grace a believer, and hath peace with God, he is yet in a wanting condition. He may be poor and needy, not only in his own eyes, but really, on whom the Lord thinketh favourably, Psal. xl. 17. Every believer can tell something, none can tell all he wants. How are they supplied? Phil. iv. 19. *My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Jesus Christ. It hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell,* Col. i. 19. And how pleasing should it be to his people, that it is lodged in so sure a hand? And how pleasant ought it to be to them, to come, and ask, and receive, till their joy be full? John xiv. 13, 14. and xvi. 23, 24. We all know, by natural light, that God is the fountain of all our supplies, *from whom cometh every good gift, and every perfect gift,* James i. 17. But gospel-light tells us by whom he giveth, and on what ground; even out of Christ's fulness, and according to his promises in Christ.

So much for the grace of faith.

2dly, Another grace that this representation of God in and by Christ directs us in the acting and exercise of, is, *repentance unto life,* as it is called in Acts xi. 18. There is a saving repentance, as well as there is a saving faith. Both are given to them whom God saveth. No impenitent person is saved, nor unbeliever. Two things only I would note about repentance. 1. Never man did truly repent, but a believer in Christ. 2. Never did a man truly repent, but for his sins against God in Christ. If you know nothing more of repentance but what you feel in the twinges of your conscience, by the light and heat of God's holy law, you are not yet come to gospel-repentance. Poor and confused are the notions that most sinners have. They think that all their sins are against God, and all their relief is in Jesus Christ; but they do not know, and lay to heart, that all their sins are against God in Christ, and that all their relief against sin is likewise in God in Christ. Men *sin against Christ,* 1 Cor. viii. 12.; they are *forgiven by Christ,* Col. iii. 13. He is *exalted with the right*

do think it no fault (but a great misery you will own it to be) to neglect the leading duty, to *rejoice in hope*, and *in the hope of the glory of God*, Rom. v. 2. This hope is in Christ; yea, *he is our hope*, 1 Tim. i. 1. *Christ in you is the hope of glory*, Col. i. 27. The hope of glory grows on no root but Jesus Christ. He is *eternal life*, 1 John i. 2. He that knows him, knows eternal life. *He that hath Christ, hath eternal life*, 1 John v. 11, 12, 13.; and he that hath Christ *dwelling in his heart by faith*, Eph. iii. 17. *hath eternal life abiding in him*, which the apostle denieth of a murderer. 1 John iii. 15.

And thus I would conclude this truth, of the glory of Christ as he is the representative of God to his church, and of the good use we should make thereof. I have insisted upon it longer than I designed. But the importance of the subject may excuse it. But when all is said, we need to begin again, that we may inculcate this truth deeply into the heart and consciences of Christians. Assure yourselves, that God out of Christ is an idol whom all the world worshippeth, (as Demetrius said of Diana, Acts xix. 27.) except the few that can say, as 1 John v. 20, 21. *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true: and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ: this is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.* All representations of God, save what is made to you in his Son, are idols. And as you love his glory, and your own eternal well, watch, and ward, and keep yourselves from all, or any of them.

SERMON XI.

JOHN xvii. 24.

Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

YOU have heard at some length of the glory of Christ, as he is the representer of God unto his church; and the rather I insisted on it, because it is a point of divine truth of the main importance to be believed, and of the main influence and direction in the whole of Christianity. There are many poor souls that are ruined with irreligion; and not a few are ruined in and by their religion, such as it is. Some know not that there is a God, or live as if they thought there was none, or wished that there was none. And some say, they know and believe that there is a God, and they make some fashion of worshipping and serving him; but they know not who he is, and what his right name is. It is only God in Christ who can be only known, and savingly known, by men. It is only a saving name of God that can be savingly known by men. And this name of God is only proclaimed in his everlasting gospel; and the knowing of this name can only be attained by Christ's declaring it, John xvii. 6, 26. 1 Cor. xii. 3. by the Holy Ghost. All contemplations of God out of Christ are but vain imaginations, and can never bring a man to the saving knowledge of God: and all worshipping of God out of Christ, is but will-worship, and provocation.

Secondly, It now follows to speak of another beam and branch of Christ's glory; and that is, in Christ's representing his church and people unto God. It is one part of his glory, that he doth so represent God unto his church, that all the saving knowledge of God is only in him and by him. Another paft of his glory (if the word *part* were proper in speaking of his infinite glory; but ye know what I mean, and none can mistake but the wilful) is, in his representing his church

so unto God, that all the acceptance we have with God, all the saving mercy we receive from God, and all the favourable views God hath of us, are from our being seen as in Christ, and as we are represented by Christ unto him. God out of Christ is a maze, a labyrinth to men, yea, a dreadful enemy: and men out of Christ are an abomination in his eyes.

My work on this *second* head of Christ's glory, shall be in three things. 1. I would shew you wherein Christ represents his people unto God. 2. What is Christ's fitness for making this representation. 3. What is his glory in making of it.

First, Wherein doth Christ represent his church unto God? By his church I mean a select company of Adam's seed (not excluding our first parents themselves) appointed to eternal life by Jesus Christ. This is his body, whereof he is Head and Saviour, Eph. v. 23. All the favourable appearances they make in God's sight, are all as they are represented unto God by Jesus Christ. This I would instruct in a few of the main and principal.

1. May I begin with the first, the deepest of all, election, that sacred eternal purpose of God's grace concerning his church? This grace is in Jesus Christ: Eph. i. 3, 4, 5. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places* (or things) *in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself.* It is but little that we do, or can know of God: little of his works, little of his word; but least of all of his thoughts and purposes. But when men think of these thoughts of God's heart, and judge of them according to their own, no wonder that they widely mistake: *For his thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways his ways, saith the Lord*, Isa. lv. 8, 9.; but as far above them are his ways and his thoughts, as the heavens are above the earth. How far is a purposing, decreeing God, above the reach of the most discerning of creatures! Yet vain man that would be wise, and quickly dreams that he is so, (and thereby bewrays his folly), will venture to pry into, judge, and reason of

the unsearchable counsels of God; when they that have most of the Spirit of God say, as in Rom. xi. 33, 34. *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?* We cannot be his counsellors; but we may, and must be his scholars, and learn, and adore, and believe what he revealeth. And in the scripture named, we have much to learn about his purposes. As, 1. That all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus flow from election-grace. 2. That this election-grace is eternal. 3. That this election-grace passed upon distinct persons, *us* and *we*. 4. That the means, and way, and the end, are all included in this decree and purpose: *That we should be holy, and without blame before him in love;* and the end is, *the adoption of children*, ver. 5. the heavenly inheritance, ver. 11. And, 5. That which pertains to my present purpose, is, that this election-grace, thus expressed, thus qualified and distinguished, is in Jesus Christ, ver. 4. *by Jesus Christ*, ver. 5. *This purpose and grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began*, 2 Tim. i. 9. Now, what is Christ's interest in election-grace? It is not to be thought that Christ purchased the love of election, as he did all the fruits of it; but only that election-love passed first on Christ the head, and then on his body the church: (though I own, that the words *first* and *second* are very improperly applied to the counsels of God, which are but one act in the Divine mind; but we must think as a child, and reason and understand as a child, while we are as a child, 1 Cor. xiii. 11.) Christ was chosen head to the church, and the church chosen to be his body. He is *chosen of God*, 1 Pet. ii. 4.: and his church is *a chosen generation*, ver. 9.; and chosen in him, not without regard to him. Election determines all the persons; election determines all the blessings these persons are to be blessed with; and election determines the way in and by which all the blessings are to be given to all these persons; and that way is in and by Jesus Christ.

2. Christ represents his church unto God in redemption. This redemption is *in Christ Jesus*, Rom. iii. 24.; it is *in him we have it*, Eph. i. 7. There is a Redeemer; the Lord Jesus

Christ, the Son of God. There is a price of the redemption; himself, his life, his blood. There are redeemed ones; a great multitude *out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation*, Rev. v. 9. In speaking of the redemption in and by Jesus Christ, I would consider it four ways.

1*st*, This redemption is to be considered as required and demanded by the Father from the Son. The work of redeeming was laid on the Son, and the price of redemption fixed upon: Even that the Son of God should, in the fulness of time, take on him man's nature; (but as *the childrens nature*, Heb. ii. 14. as *the seed of Abraham*, ver. 16.): that in that nature he should stand in their room and stead, and suffer what his people deserved by their sins; and purchase blessings for them, which they could never procure to themselves, and without which they must perish. This price of redemption was required of Christ, John x. 18.; and required in honour to God's holy justice, in love and mercy to his chosen, and in a design of glory to his Son. A price of redemption for a sinner was never required by God of a sinner. He knoweth well, that they have nothing to pay. Yea, the damned in hell are not sent thither to pay, but to be punished. Your proverb, That a prison pays no debts, is true of God's dreadful prison, hell, and of the miserable prisoners there. The Lord save you from it, and instruct you in the only way to escape it. You are great debtors to God; you can never pay the first, much less the last farthing of it. He doth not require payment of you; but all he craveth of you, is, that you would humbly own your debt, and your inability to pay, and betake yourselves unto the Surety's payment. It was no improper saying concerning the gospel, used by a minister in preaching to an ignorant people: "The gospel (he said) is "nothing but good news, that a rich man is come into the "country to pay poor folks debts." On this errand the Father sent him; and for this end we should believe on him.

2*dly*, Consider Christ's redemption as paid by Jesus Christ, and so wrought out by him. All the price demanded, he paid fully. The debt was perfectly paid, in full measure, heaped up, and running over. For when the righteousness of God is paid for the redemption of sinners, and of their

transgressions, (as in Heb. ix. 15.), we quickly see where the advantage lieth: for the demerit of sin is mainly heightened by the dignity of the party offended; and the merit of righteousness, by the dignity of the party that performs it. On this, as on other accounts, *grace doth much more abound than sin*, Rom. v. 20, 21.; and this grace doth reign, where sin had reigned. Since sin came into the world, and grace appeared in the first gospel-promise, Gen. iii. 15. there never was a sinner redeemed and saved, never was any propitiation made for sin, but what our Lord Jesus Christ the Redeemer did, and made, by his dying at Jerusalem. The virtue of it, according to the covenant, was effectual to believers, before and after his death, Acts xv. 11.; and will still be till his second coming, Heb. ix. 28.

3dly, Consider redemption as accepted by God. Though a price be demanded, and paid as demanded: yet the redemption is not a concluded bargain, unless it be accepted. But the price of the church's redemption was accepted with the highest good-will: Eph. v. 2. Christ *loved us, and gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.* The sacrifice was offered to God, but offered for us. The savour of this sacrifice ascends upwards, and giveth satisfaction to Divine justice; and it descends downwards to the hearts and consciences of believers, for their peace and salvation, Heb. ix. 14. *It pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief*, Isa. liii. 10. And both this way and means, and the fruits and effects thereof, are the pleasure of Jehovah, which prospers in the hand of our dying Lord Jesus; as in that verse, *The Father loved his Son, for laying down his life for his sheep*, John x. 17, 18. And this *commandment he received of his Father.* Our Lord had this commandment in his heart, and came to do it, and delighted in doing it, Psal. xl. 6, 7, 8. with Heb. x. 5,—10. This divine acceptance of the price of his church's redemption, is demonstrated two ways especially. *1.* In the glory that the Lord Redeemer was admitted unto, Phil. ii. 6,—11. Eph. i. 20,—23. Heb. i. 3. ii. 9. and xii. 2. and in many places. Only consider his own words to his disciples, and to his Father. To the disciples, in John xvi. 10. *He (the Holy Spirit whom I will send from my Father) shall*

convince the world of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more. The conviction is deep, and so is the reason and ground of it. Christ going to leave them, and their seeing him no more, as before and now, was their main grief. They could not think that any good should accrue to them by this sad parting, much less so great blessings as Christ told them of, and which quickly after they knew and owned: Acts ii. 33. *Being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.* And as he spoke this, and words to the same purpose, in the fulfilling of this promise, three thousand sinners, and bloody ones too, are convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and made believers. Christ's words to his Father are, in John xvii. 4. *I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do* (in it). If Christ came back again into the world, (save to judge it; and that will be in the clouds), men might think, that he had not done all he first came for. But he did all, as it was foretold in Dan. ix. 24. *He finished the transgression, and made an end of sins,* (as Heb. ix. 26. *He put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*), *and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness, and sealed up the vision and prophecy, and anointed the most holy.* 2. As Christ's glory in heaven, on his paying the price of redemption, is a demonstration of its acceptance with God; so all the grace and glory on earth, and in heaven, in time, and to eternity, which is poured forth abundantly on men, (all which flows from the virtue of this price), is another demonstration of God's acceptance of this required and paid most precious price. Of which anon.

4*thly*, Consider redemption in Christ as it is applied to the redeemed. As the price was demanded by the Father, as it was paid by the Son, as this payment was accepted of the Father; all those concern the redeemed nearly: but all is only about them, and for them. But application is to them, on them, and in them. And all the application of Christ's redemption, depends on, and flows from the design of the Father and Son in this great work of redemption. I would consider redemption as applied to persons, and to blessings, and

order. 1. As to persons. Christ's redemption is ap- to all, and none but them, for whom it was paid. *He justify many:* (whom! how many! and how! and): *for he shall bear their iniquities*, Isa. liii. 11. Univer- ection is rather nonsense, and a contradiction in its terms; an error: for if there be an election of grace, (as there surely as there is a sovereign *God of all grace*, as he is , 1 Pet. v. 10.), some are chosen, and not all: and there- some are passed by. Universal salvation is a gross and able error, that few or none dare own. But universal option hath many advocates and patterns. Whoever de- it so as to exclude the special, particular redemption of lect of God, they do fight against the tenor of the gos- Christ died for known distinct persons; for his sheep, he knew, John x. 14, 27. He died for them, in love m; and doubtless he knew well whom he loved. His , the price of redemption, is *the blood of the everlasting nt*, Heb. xiii. 20. which did confirm this covenant, ix. 15, 16. And was not this price paid according to rms of this covenant? And did not this covenant fix he price, and who should pay it; and the purchase, and hould enjoy it? This you may all be sure of, that how- men, by their wit and learning, may dispute and talk Christ's death, and its extent, in his and his Father's de- in it; yet this precious gospel-truth, of redemption by Christ, is never rightly known, rightly believed, nor y used, till a particular, lost and sold sinner put in by for a share and interest in it. Thus Paul, Gal. ii. 20. ion of God *loved me, and gave himself for me.* How Paul know this? When Christ died, and redeemed his h, Paul was an ungodly wretch, a very hypocrite; and Christ had died, and rose again, and ascended up into Paul hated the very name of Christ, and persecuted to all that called on his name. But after God, *that had ted him from his mother's womb, had called him by his grace, vealed his Son in him*, Gal. i. 15, 16. then, and not till he knew that Christ died for him, and that in love to and ever after he lived by the faith of it. 2. This re- ion by Christ is applied as to blessings also, and that in

a wise order. Faith is first, and a fruit of Christ's redemption: John xii. 32. *And I, if I be* (or *when I am*) *lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me; i. e.* "All whom I "am lifted up for, them will I draw unto me." It is no wonder, that some men do not look on faith as the purchase of Christ's redemption, that dream of a kind of saving faith that Christ the Redeemer is not the object of. But we know, that unto us *it is given on the behalf of Christ, to believe on him*, Phil. i. 29.; and that such as have true faith, *have obtained this precious grace, through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ*, (for so it should be read, according to the original), 2 Pet. i. 1. And he is *the author and finisher of our faith*, Heb. xii. 2. And this leads me to speak of the blessings of Christ's redemption, that the redeemed get by the virtue of it, and by Christ's representing them unto God.

(1.) They are represented by Christ unto God for their justification; and obtain it, when, and as, and because, represented to God in him, and by him. This justification of a sinner by faith in Christ Jesus, is, ever was, and ever will be, the darkest riddle, and the greatest stumbling-block, to all the unbelieving world. And it is always so as to gospel-truth; that the nearer relation a gospel-truth hath unto the person and undertaking of the wonderful Saviour, (as he is called, Isa. ix. 6.), the less a natural man seeth, and the more ready is he to stumble at it, and to mistake it. It is but a vain attempt of them, (how good soever their design be, and how learned and wise soever they be that manage it), who study to accommodate the gospel-doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ, unto the gust, liking, and understandings of unbelievers. Such will never, nor can, know and like it, 1 Cor. ii. 14. It is (as all the things of the Spirit of God are) dark, and foolishness to them. And they that know least of Christ, and of faith in him, and of justification by faith, are most bold and daring to reproach all, and to speak evil of things they know not. None need to wonder at what a poor wretch said and wrote, (though he bore no small name in the world), "That of all the writers of the New Testament, "Paul was the darkest and most obscure author." It was however plainly (though wickedly) said; and it is the true

meaning of all unbelievers, and the fruit of their unbelief; and remains in all men *till faith come*, as Gal. iii. 23, 25. This attempt of making justification by faith in Christ palatable to a natural man, is not only vain and ineffectual; but it hath no small influence on manifold corruptions of this truth, and of mens bringing in of another gospel, (Gal. i. 6.), that a natural man may sooner know, and better like. When natural men hear of the doctrine of justification, (by which they understand, that a sinner is counted and accepted as righteous before God, and is pardoned all his sins, and adjudged to eternal life), they all immediately and naturally think, that this blessing can only come to men, by one, or other, or both those ways, which are both false ways: 1. Either that God will abate somewhat of the strictness of his law: or, 2. That he will some way enable a sinner to do something, and to bring something to God, in order to his acceptance with God: Either that God will bring down his law to a sinner, or bring up a sinner to obey it. As to the first, That God will abate of the strictness of his law, and demand less; it is a vain and false notion. But it is natural and constant in unrenewed men. Christ's great enemies, the scribes and Pharisees, that were wholly for righteousness by works, to support this Babel, did necessarily explain God's holy law in such a manner as was no hard thing to fulfil it; and all their successors are driven to the same shift. Our Lord, (who *came not to destroy, but to fulfil the law*, Matth. v. 17.), to overthrow their rotten foundation, tells all, in ver. 20. *Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.* This our Lord proveth, by a true interpretation of the law, in its perfection and spirituality, and vast extent; so as that no sinner can fulfil it, and get righteousness and life by it. And thus always God's law ought to be preached to men; as so holy and perfect a law, that no sinner can fulfil it; and as so strong and dreadful, that no sinner can escape its reach, nor endure its sentence; that they may look out for relief in Christ alone. 2. The other thought of a natural man is, That a sinner must do some good, and be made holy, that he may be justified and pardoned. And though the poor sinner is all naught, hath

nothing, and can do nothing that is good; yet the legal spirit in himself, and the legal teachers whom he loveth to hear, do use him more severely than the Egyptian taskmasters did the children of Israel. For Israel had earth to make Pharaoh's bricks of, and, with much pains, might gather stubble in the land of Egypt, instead of straw. But a sinner under the law is in a worse condition: for there is neither earth nor straw in all God's world for a sinner to make one brick, one good work of; and yet they are called upon daily to do a great many; and are severely beaten when they do not fulfil their tasks. Many are ready to say, Doth not God command sinners in his word to repent, believe, and to do well? Yes, surely he doth. The Old and New Testament is full of such commands; and ministers may surely, and must teach men what God commands. But they should teach men those things as God means and intends; and that is declared in his word. They should teach them as God will have them to teach, and all men to learn; that is, that those things are God's will, and our duty; but that power and will to obey is not in men, but must be wrought by grace in them: Phil. ii. 13. *For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* John xiv. 4, 5. *For without me ye can do nothing.* If so it be said of believers, and of true branches in the true vine, what must be said of sinners, in and of themselves? those commands are not given to make sinners proud, and to think what they can do; but to tell them God's mind, and what is their duty to do; that by the hearing of God's holy will, and feeling of their own utter inability to do any good, they may be humbled, and betake themselves to Christ by faith, on whom all our help is laid. But a replier against God may yet say, Where is justice in commanding what he knows we cannot do, and then in punishing for not doing? Many things have been said to answer such a cavil. I shall name but three. 1. All were once in Adam able to do God's will. This ability is lost by the first sin. If man by his sin have lost his power to do God's work, God hath not lost his authority and power to command man's duty, nor his right to punish man's sin. 2. All men naturally think that they can do something that is good, and a great deal too. The

Lord therefore justly tries them, and lets them try what they can do. 3. This natural inability in sinners to do any good, is what they love; and so is doubly sinful, as well as miserable. His *cannot* is inseparable from his *will not*. He is a captive to the devil at his will, 2 Tim. ii. 26. And the captive loves his jailor, and his chains, and his drudgery; and neither longs for liberty, nor welcomes the news of a Redeemer; yea, striveth against him, till Christ subdue him by his grace, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. So that either of those notions are false, that God will abate of the strictness of his law, or will enable a sinner to do any thing pleasing to God before he be justified. Besides, if either of those were, they would quite alter and invert that mystery of justification by Christ that is revealed to us so plainly in the scriptures. It is not the justification of a good and holy man, but of a sinner; yea, of a sinner under the law, guilty of manifold breaches of this law, for which he is accused, arraigned, cursed, and condemned by it, and his mouth stopped; having no defence and no excuse to make, and no shift or way of escape left him, but what the gospel reveals, Rom. iii. 9,—31. It is about the justification of a man in this sad condition that the gospel speaks, and tells us these good tidings.

1. That a perfect righteousness, answering fully all the ommands and the demands of the law, hath been wrought it by the Lord Jesus Christ. He was made under the same w his people are under whom thus he redeems, Gal. iv. 4, If we had been under one law, and Christ made under other, it would not, nor could it have been fit and profita- for us. You hear by some of the mediatorial law, proper Christ only. It is true, never had any but Christ a com- d from God to redeem lost sinners; and it is as true, this was in the same command, that he *should be made woman, and made under the law, that he might redeem them vere under the law.* So that the work of Christ to re- , and his being thus made for that work, are equally ar to Christ. For as the work and glory of redeeming urch is his only; so his being *made of a woman, and made he law*, can be said of none, but of Christ as man; no han it can be said of any but Christ, that he is God's

own son, sent, Rom. viii. 3. Adam, the first man, was created by God; the first woman built and made of the man, Gen. ii. Of this blood all nations do spring in an ordinary way: and so all mankind are begotten by a man, and born of a woman. But the Son of God took man's nature of a woman only; and so, whereas all besides are born of a woman, he alone was *made of a woman*. So we all are born under the law, and under its curse, by Adam's first sin. Christ only was *made under the law*. This law demands perfect obedience to all its commands and demands, and layeth on the sinner God the lawgiver's wrath and curse for the least disobedience. Christ answered the law in both. As the eternal Son of God, he was above the law; and as sinless man, the law had nothing to say against him. But when he took on him man's nature, and therein took on him the law-place of his people, and they so sinful; obedience was justly craved of him, and the debt of his people's sins justly exacted on him. And both he cheerfully and fully did perform and endure. And thus are we saved.

2. That this righteousness wrought out by Christ, was wrought out for others, and not for himself. He wove and made this coat, for the covering and clothing of his naked people. The gospel is full of this, in telling us both the errand his Father sent him on, and the work and business he did when he came. He needed no such garment for himself; but wove it out of his own blood and bowels, for his people, whom he loved, and who he well knew needed it greatly.

3. That this righteousness, thus wrought out by Jesus Christ, is freely and fully tendered and offered to all that hear the gospel: all of it (for it is not divided nor divisible) unto every man or woman; (for gospel-offers have no exceptions). Thus Peter made the offer to every one of them that heard him, Acts ii. 38. He excepts not the very murderers of Christ, nor the mockers at him on the cross, when Christ was working out this righteousness. So his *beloved brother Paul* (as he calls him, 2 Pet. iii. 15.) preached, Acts xiii. 38, 39. *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man* (alas! this man is little known by

most men) *is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe, are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.* Do you then believe on him, and be justified by him; lest that word be fulfilled on you, *Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish,* ver. 41. And no longer than the next Sabbath-day was it in fulfilling, ver. 46, 47, 48. And if the company were never so great nor so bad, a gospel-minister may make this large offer, as Christ himself did, John vii. 37. *In the last day, that great day of the feast,* (when the great convocation of the people was), *Jesus stood and cried,* (that he might be seen and heard by all), *saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.* And this coming to him, and drinking, is believing on Christ, ver. 38, 39. When he is in heaven, and sending a letter by John his messenger, to a sorry church, and in a sad case, he saith so to them, Rev iii. 20. *Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.* To name no more of the large offers of Christ in the gospel, I will conclude with the last in the Bible, Rev. xxii. 17. *And let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

4. That this large offer made of Christ in the gospel, is the ordinary and appointed means of working faith in Christ. Thus, Rom. x. 17. *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;* and Rom. i. 16, 17. *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ;* (and never did an honest preacher make a poorer life in worldly things, of the gospel, than Paul did): *for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.* I need not insist on so plain a truth.

5. That this righteousness of Christ is upon all that believe. It is offered to all to be embraced by faith; and it is given and conferred upon all that believe, upon their believing. Whenever the hand of the Lord is upon the hearts of hearers of the gospel, and draws them forth to betake themselves to this righteousness of Christ, to embrace it, and

to trust all their acceptance with God upon it alone, they are justified by it: Rom. iii. 22, 23. *The righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ,* is *unto all, and upon all that believe; for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* A blessed saying, and an odd-like reason to confirm it. Are all sinners alike? and are all believers alike? No, surely, Are not some sinners greater sinners than others? and some believers better believers, and greater saints, than others? Yes, surely. But in this matter of Christ's righteousness there is no difference. All sinners are alike in this, that they are in a condemned state alike, and alike past all relief, save in and by Christ and his righteousness: and all believers in Christ are alike in that saved state they are in, by Christ's righteousness being on them. All sinners are alike needy; and all believers are alike partakers of this righteousness of God.

6. *Lastly,* That upon this righteousness of Christ's being on a believer in him, these three things follow: That the believer is justified; God justified in justifying of him; and the justified man's mouth is stopped as to all glorying, save in the Lord. The believer is justified, counted and reputed a righteous man, through the righteousness imputed to him. On the account of this same imputed righteousness of Christ, all his sins are forgiven and blotted out, and he is *passed from death to life, and shall not come into condemnation,* John v. 24. Rom. viii. 1, 33, 34. He is reconciled to God, and dealt with as a friend of God. God is also justified in his passing this sentence of justification on the believer. In all things, and above all, we should be tender of God's glory. There are specially three acts of God's righteous judgment that are censured much by the ungodly, and that Christians should be careful to justify God in. One is, his just judgment on the first Adam and his posterity. How full are most mens hearts, and some mens mouths, and too many pens, with censures of this awful, but just sentence? The other is, the Lord's way of dealing with the second Adam, Jesus Christ. He was not spared, but put to sore sufferings. Any may see amazing mercy; but who behold, and glorify God's righteousness and justice, in the death of Christ? And the third

is this I am upon, the justice of God in justifying a believer. And the cause of mens censures and mistakes about all the three is much the same, and the censures are usually in the same sort of persons. The true cause of these challenges of God's *judgments* which *are a great depth*, Psalm xxxvi. 6. is, mens ignorance of the justice, majesty, and greatness of God. Unto such arguers against God, the words of Elihu to Job may properly be applied, Job xxxiii. 12, 13. *Behold, in this thou art not just; I will answer thee, that God is greater than man. Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.* In these three instances we may easily see how this ignorance of these worketh. In the first act of justice in God, we find one man's one act of disobedience conveying guilt, condemnation, and death, to all his natural offspring. In the second instance, we find all the sins of many sinners charged, and laid on a sinless person, and justice dealing with him as with a criminal. In the third, we find the righteousness of Christ, which he wrought out in making propitiation for sin, imputed to the justifying of a believer: and in this God is justified: Rom. iii. 26. *To declare at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus.* Lastly, In this justification, the justified man's mouth is stopped as to all glorying, but only in the Lord. For as vast a blessing as it is there is no place left for glorying. Therefore, in the next verse, the 27th, he saith, *Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.* The law, when it condemns, stops the sinner's mouth from replying, to justify himself, Rom. iii. 19.; and the gospel, when it absolves, stops the believer's mouth from glorying in himself, when justified. But doth not the law of works exclude boasting sufficiently? That law that commands more than the man can do, doth it not shut out boasting? Can any man say, that he hath fulfilled that law? No, surely. No man that in any measure knows the holiness of that law, and knows himself, his heart and doings, will say so. But besides that many are so blind and ignorant, both of God's law and of themselves, that they are ready to boast without any cause; all men that seek justification by the law, and by doing, they

do design boasting, though they never reach it. Though they cannot reach glorying before God, yet would they fain be at it. But the justified believer, as he never reacheth it when he is justified, so he never designs it when he seeks justification. The righteousness in which he is justified, is wholly wrought out by another; and one so great, that none that know him will adventure to put in for a share in his crown; *the Lord our righteousness*, Jer. xxiii. 6. Yet the blessing of it is given to his church, and she is called by her husband's name, Jer. xxxiii. 16. The revealing of this righteousness is from the Lord, by his word and Spirit; without which no man could ever find it out. The faith by which he layeth hold on it, is the work of God; and neither grew up in his heart, nor was acquired by his own industry, nor conveyed by the power of any creature. The imputing of this righteousness unto his justification, is God's act of free grace, Rom. iii. 24.; nothing in the man moving God to impute it; and nothing in God but his grace in Christ Jesus. The sinner, when he seeks it by faith, looks on nothing but this grace; and when he hath got it, and knows it, owns heartily, that this spiritual blessing (as all others are, Eph. i. 3,—7.) is *to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.* It cannot be denied, but a man may be proud of his justification, and of his faith. But in that case I am bold to say, that one of these things are: Either that it is a false justification, and a false faith, that this man boasts of, (and these are too common among professors); or that true justification is out of his sight, and his faith out of exercise, when any boasting riseth in the heart of a real believer. For let but a believer set himself before God, the Judge of all; let him read God's law, and his own heart and conscience; and see what he hath to boast of: nay, he will see, that he hath all reason for fear and shame, when he stands before this tribunal. Let him next by faith see Jesus Christ at this same judgment-seat, charged with this man's sins, and discharging that debt, and buying all grace and glory for him by the price of his precious blood; and, lastly, let him, by the same faith, behold God justifying him freely, and fully, and only, on the account of this satisfaction given by Christ: and then, and

thus, let this man see, and own, that as there is no room left for boasting, so he will find no inclination in his heart unto it. It is the character of a true Christian in Phil. iii. 3. *For we are the circumcision,* (true Jews, as Rom. ii. 28, 29.) *which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice,* (or *glory*) *in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.* So that, whereas righteousness by the law is both sought by men in pride; and when they dream that they shall either reach it, or that they have got it, (and such dreams are not rare, though groundless), pride and boasting increaseth so much, that not only are their hearts puffed up within, not only do they glory before men, as Christ tells us of such hypocrites in Matth. vi. but they dare boast before God, as the Pharisee did, Luke xviii. 11.: so, on the other hand, the justifying righteousness of God, wrought out by Christ, and applied to the believer on Christ, was appointed of God, brought in by Christ, revealed in the gospel, and given to the believer, for the highest glory of the free giver, and the deepest humbling of the happy, but unworthy receivers. And thus is that prophecy and promise fulfilled in Isa. xlv. 24, 25. *Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.*

What then is God's justifying a believer in Jesus Christ? It is nothing else, but God's gracious looking on a man, judging of him, and dealing with him, as in Christ, and as represented by Christ to God, for justification of life. There is a similitude commonly used, taken from Jacob's getting his father Isaac's blessing, in his brother Esau's raiment, Gen. xxvii. All similitudes, even in scripture, taken from men's ways, to express God's ways, want some grains to make them pass current; and this especially: for old Isaac was deceived in bestowing his blessing, Heb. xi. 20. *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, concerning things to come.* Though Isaac did so by faith; yet the blessings he gave his sons, were not only greatly different, but he was also at first deceived in the persons whom he did bless. Yet though Jacob supplanted his brother of the birth-right, Gen. xxv. 30,—34. and xxvii. of the blessing, by his mother's cunning, and his own lying; yet neither of these did hinder Isaac's faith, nor the lighting of the

blessing on Jacob, according to the election of grace, and the oracle that declared it, when they both were in the womb, Gen. xxv. 23. But though Jacob deceived his father in the way wherein he sought the blessing; yet, in giving of his blessing by faith to Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, Heb. ix. 21. he guided both his hands wittingly, and his words wisely, and gave the blessing, by the spirit of prophecy, Gen. xlviii. 14,—20. But *the Lord always knoweth who are his*, 2 Tim. ii. 19. He always knows whom he blesseth, and what blessings he gives. All our acceptance with, and justification before God, comes by the representation Christ makes of us to God. He was charged at the bar of justice for our sins; he answered this charge by a perfect satisfaction, and thus was *justified in the Spirit*, 1 Tim. iii. 16.; and when this satisfaction is put to our account, we are *justified by his blood*, Rom. v. 9.

So much for the first blessing of justification.

(2.) Christ represents his church unto God for their sanctification. Election in Christ, is an eternal purpose in God's heart and counsel about his people. Redemption by Christ, is a divine bargain for them, and their salvation, betwixt the Father and the Son. Justification is a gracious sentence of God in Christ, on them that are represented by him for acceptance. By this act and sentence the state of their persons is favourably changed. But sanctification is a divine work on them, that changeth their heart and nature. The Spirit of sanctification is a precious gift of divine love; and is only given to them that are in Christ, and because they are in him: Gal. iv. 6. *And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.* All the anointings of the Holy Ghost that believers receive, are but some drops that fall down from the head of our High-priest, unto the skirts of his garments, Psal. cxxxiii. 2. He *received the Spirit without measure*, John iii. 34. that to his people, even *to every one of them, grace may be given, according to the measure of the gift of Christ*, Eph. iv. 7.; not according to the measure that Christ got, but the measure that Christ giveth. And all of them receive it. Rom. viii. 9. *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* Let him not *name the name*

of Christ (as his Lord and Master), *that departeth not from iniquity*, 2 Tim. ii. 19. All whose iniquities Christ did bear for their expiation, in due time Christ *blesseth them, in turning every one of them away from their iniquities*, Acts iii. 26. This blessing of sanctification is of pure grace: for, as there is nothing of worth in a man, or regarded by God in justifying; so there is nothing of goodness, or of fit matter, for God to work upon in his sanctifying. God's word is as clear about this, as about the other. The account that we have so largely of the natural state of all men without Christ, is sufficient to show the absolute necessity all stand in of God's grace to save them, and to declare both the freedom and power of that grace in all its applications to men. Grace is the spring of salvation, and of all its parts; Christ is the root of all; and eternal life and glory is the ripe fruit of all that grace of God, that *reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord*, Rom. v. 21. See but these texts, and read them, and conclude this truth, 1 Cor. vi. 11. Eph. ii. 1,—7. and Tit. iii. 3,—7. In all which places justification and sanctification are joined, (as they are certainly and constantly in all that partake of them); unworthiness in the receivers overcome, and passed over, by the grace of the giver; and the interest of Jesus Christ, in God's giving, and in his people's receiving of both these blessings, is plainly told us.

(3.) All the communion, and fellowship, and familiarity with God, that a believer receiveth, and is admitted unto, is all by Jesus Christ, and by his representing him to God, Rom. v. 1, 2. 1 John i. 3. John xiv. 23. Blessed be God there is a great deal of it; and more might be attained, if we were painful and diligent. This is so great a mercy, that *come and see, come and taste*, is the best counsel can be given, Psal. xxxiv. 8. And such as taste it, know its worth better than the apostle can tell them; and that it all comes by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. He is not only the only Mediator of reconciliation and of intercession, but of fellowship with God: Eph. ii. 18. *For through him we both* (Jews or Gentiles, if believers) *have an access by one Spirit unto the Father.*

(4.) *Lastly*, The crown of glory, and admission to heaven, is granted to believers upon the account of the righteousness

of Christ on the believer: Rom. vi. 22, 23. *But now being made free from sin* (from the condemning and commanding power of sin, in justification and sanctification, of which the apostle had been speaking in the 5th and 6th chapters), *and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.* Sanctification *by faith in Christ*, Acts xxvi. 18. is a precious gift of God. The perfecting of it by faith in the promises, is a blessed design and exercise through the whole life of a Christian, 2 Cor. vii. 1. It is most pursued after, but never attained by the best, till they attain *the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ*, Phil. iii. 13, 14. But when this prize is attained by them, and bestowed on them, it is not given them, because they are holy, (though none but the sanctified inherit it, Acts xxvi. 18.), but because they are in Christ, members of his body; and because he is made all things for them for their salvation, 1 Cor. i. 30.; and because they are represented by him, and presented unto God, for this last, greatest, and everlasting acceptance. *Behold, I, and the children which God hath given me*, Heb. ii. 13. The righteousness of Christ is the eternal robe of the glorified, and their most glorious one; and the cause of their perfection in holiness, and of its eternal duration. The glory and whiteness of their robes, is in their being *washed, and made white in the blood of the Lamb*, Rev. vii. 14. If Christians be but careful to give God's grace in Christ its true use and praise, while they are on earth; no doubt but all that get to heaven, will sing the song of the Lamb with everlasting joy, *To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever, Amen.* Rev. i. 5, 6. and v. 9, 10. And though some true Christians may possibly (either by the snare of dark or unsound doctrine, or by a mistaken zeal for inherent personal holiness) have less exercise by faith on Christ's righteousness than some others, and though some may advance by grace farther in sanctification than others, (and it is a very valuable attainment); yet all of them, when they come to die, and to knock at heaven's gate for entrance into their Master's joy, do mind far other-

wise the blood that bought the inheritance, than any thing wrought in them to make them meet for it, Col. i. 12. or than any pains they have been at in walking and running their race towards it.

So much for this first thing, Wherein doth Christ represent his church unto God?

Secondly, What is Christ's fitness for making this representation of the church unto God?

1. In the constitution of his person. He is a rare, singular person; God-man, God's Son made man. And because he is God-man in one person, he is a person only fit, and highly fit, to represent God unto man, and man unto God. He is fit to represent God unto man; for in Christ we see God in a man, in our nature. And he is fit to represent man unto God; for God seeth our nature in his Son. We see God in him, and God seeth us in him. We can never see and take up God rightly and by faith, but as he is in his Son Jesus Christ; nor can God ever graciously look on a sinner but in his Son.

2. Christ is fit for making this representation of his church to God, by his office of Mediator. None is fit for this office but Christ; none is put in it but he, 1 Tim. ii. 5.; and none but God-man can discharge it. The greatness of the work that is to be done in this office, and the greatness of the glory that follows on its discharge, are far too high for a mere creature. Such as deny that Christ is true God, or that deny that he is true man, or deny that he is God-man in one person, (and from the apostles days to ours, the enemy hath been sowing such tares in God's field), do deny a fit Mediator betwixt God and men, and thereby strike at the rock the church is built upon. Now, the office of a mediator is to deal with two parties: Gal. iii. 20. *Now a mediator is not a mediator of one;* but he is so betwixt two. The high-priest under the law, was in his office a type of Christ in his priesthood. Aaron and his successors did, as high-priests and typical mediators, represent all Israel (then God's only church) unto God, especially in the solemn day of atonement, Lev. xvi.; when the high-priest offered the sacrifice, after confessing of, and a typical imputing of Israel's sin to the innocent creature to be sa-

crificed, and went with its blood into the holiest of all, (a piece of earth likest heaven of any thing or place made with hands), there to make atonement. This high-priest was also to *bear their names* (whom he represented) *before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial*, Exod. xxviii. 12, and 29. *And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breast-plate of judgment, upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually.* Aaron bare but the general names of the tribes of Israel: but Christ, our High-priest, hath a larger heart and breast-plate; and bears upon it all the particular names of his people, and represents them all unto God, both in his offering of himself as a sacrifice for them, in his entering in with his own blood into the true holiest of all, and in his appearing in heaven in the presence of God for them, Heb. ix. 12,—24. And, by the way, I may say, that the epistle to the Hebrews is a key to all the Old Testament, and especially to the book of Leviticus, and the Old Testament worship.

Thirdly, What is the glory of Christ in making this representation of his church unto God? We easily conceive that there is much glory in his representing God unto his church; but his glory in representing them unto God, is not so easily seen by us. But it is surely a great glory. So the apostle saith, Heb. v. 5, 6. *Christ glorified not himself to be made an High-priest; but he that said unto him* as in Psal. ii. 7. and cx. 4. He glorified him, and made him an High-priest. But what glory was there in this, when he was to be the sacrifice himself who was made the priest; and to make this sacrifice in all the lowest and most humbling circumstances, smitten of God, despised of men, and abased even unto death and the curse; wherein was the glory of this? At first view, nothing appears but shame and dishonour. A few things shall conclude this matter at this time.

1. Consider whom he did, and doth represent unto God for acceptance. They are all sinners. The vilest thing is sin; the basest creature is a sinner: yea, sinners are not properly creatures of God's making, but are vile things of the devil's and of their own making; the only shameful things in God's world. And sin had never been permitted to enter

into the world, if God had not resolved in himself to gather in a rent of glory to his justice, in punishing it in many; and to his mercy, in pardoning it in others. And this glory to pardoning grace comes by the redemption in Christ Jesus, Eph. i. 7. Many of these pardoned sinners are of the worst sort of sinners, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11.; and all of them think themselves such, 1 Tim. i. 15, 16.; and they therein do not think amiss. And they are a great many, as will appear in the day of their last *gathering together to Christ*, as it is called, 2 Thess. ii. 1.; though not so many as the lost. Thence we read of a lost world, and of a saved world, in the word. When a sinner hath his eyes opened to see himself, he lothes himself; and thinks that he is enough to pollute, and defile, and burden the whole creation of God: he abhors himself, and thinks every one, especially the godly, should abhor him too: but mainly he judgeth himself most justly lothsome to God. Must it not be a great and glorious thing in that person, that can, and doth represent such vile creatures unto a gracious acceptance with God?

2. Consider to whom they are represented for acceptance; even to an holy and just God; a God that hates all iniquity wherever he seeth it, Hab. i. 13.; and seeth it wherever it is; and punisheth it wherever it is not covered and pardoned. All discoveries of God's glorious holiness, and of our own sinful vileness, render this representation for acceptance more needful to be got, and the more hard to be believed, (all exercised Christians know), and the more glorious to Christ when it is obtained.

. *Lastly*, Consider what a glorious acceptance this representation by Christ doth procure. They for whom it is made, accepted, Eph. i. 6.; are beloved; are received into all familiarity with God; and, in that love, adjudged unto all things in heavenly things in Christ Jesus.

APPLICATION. I shall at this time only add one word of application; and it is this. I have been speaking to you of his glory in representing his church unto God; I would ask your consciences this one question, How do you appear before God? you all know, or profess you

See Psal. xxxii. 1, 2. with Paul's comment on it, in Rom. iv. 6, 7, 8. *Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.* A few remarks on those two scriptures, shall be all I shall say on the doctrinal part, and then proceed in application: The first thing I remark, is this: That the apostle names only those words of the Psalmist that belong to his present purpose. He is handling the doctrine of the justification of a sinner. This blessed doctrine he had taught in the preceding chapter, with so clear a light, that all the darkness of hell will never be able to put out, or quench, in the church of Christ. This blessing, he teacheth, comes by the free grace of God, in and by the redemption made by Christ; and is given by God and possessed by men, by faith in Christ's redeeming blood, without any interest of the works of the law therein. Christ indeed dealt with the law, and fulfilled all the righteousness thereof, for our justification; but we have nothing to do with the law, in our dealing with God for our justification; but to come with its condemning sentence in our guilty conscience, that we may lay hold of Christ's righteousness; which, as it fulfilled the law, when wrought out by Christ; so it sprinkles our consciences, when applied to us by his Spirit and grace, and when it is applied unto by us by faith. And those two applications are inseparable, and both the fruits of the saving grace of God. This doctrine Paul confirms by two instances, in two eminent saints, in this fourth chapter; Abraham before the law, ver. 1,—5. and afterwards in this chapter; and David under the law, ver. 6, 7, 8. Whatever difference there was in the dispensations they were under, (and there was a great one); yet there was none in the way of their justification before God. Both were by God's grace, without the works of the law, without work, without hire, without any glorying before God. Now, David hath said in Psal. xxxii. 2. *Blessed is the man* also *in whose spirit there is no guile.* But this pertaining to the blessing of sanctification, though inseparable from that of justification, (which is the apostle's distinct theme in this context), is

therefore wisely omitted by the apostle. A second thing I remark, in comparing these two scriptures, is this: That whereas David lays the blessedness on the *pardoned man, the man whose sins are covered, the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity;* Paul tells us, that herein David *describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works* when he said so. David saith nothing of the *imputing of righteousness*, but only of the *not imputing of* sin. Paul teacheth, that the *not imputing of sin*, is the same with *the imputing of righteousness, and that without works* also. A few things will serve to clear this. 1. Every man's state before God, is as God judgeth and reckons of him. His account and reckoning of a man is always right and true; and it is always decisive and determining; for it is the highest Judge's sentence. Thus is it now, thus will it always be. 2. This judgment of this supreme Judge concerning them, is always about sin, or righteousness. His condemning sentence is for sin; his approving sentence is for righteousness. *To clear the guilty, and to condemn the righteous, are both an abomination to the Lord,* as an earthly judge, Prov. xvii. 15. And who, without blasphemy, can charge the Judge of all the earth with it? Gen. xviii. 25. Every man therefore, even now, is in God's sight under a sentence, either of condemnation, because of sin; or of approbation, because of righteousness; that is, in the dialect of the Holy Ghost, hath either *sin imputed to him for condemnation*, or *righteousness imputed to him for the justification of life*, as Paul calls it, Rom. v. 18. 3. Sin and righteousness are contraries, and expel one another, and cannot consist together. Guilty, or not guilty, every one is, and must be in the eye of God, and at the bar of God's law and judgment. If guilty, then not righteous, and therefore condemned: if not guilty, then righteous, and therefore absolved and acquitted. This alternative, *sinful*, or *lawful*, reacheth to all our thoughts and actions; and thus are they judged by God, as contrary or consonant to the law, the rule. And also *guilty*, or *not guilty*, or *righteous*, reacheth to the state of all persons before God; and thus are we all judged and accounted of by the Lord, as we are under sin, or under righteousness. 4. Now when man is fallen, and there is nothing but sin in

man, and no righteousness can be found in him, God hath provided a righteousness without him, in and by which he may only, and may surely, and may justly, be justified before God. Of which we have been speaking. This is that righteousness of Christ, in which all believers on him stand accepted before God. It is imputed to them, and therefore their sin is not imputed to them? and thus are they judged and absolved at God's throne of grace in Christ Jesus. So that, to conclude this, unless all that we are, all that we have done, be covered by this righteousness; unless there be a reckoning of this righteousness of Christ to us by God; sin, our own sin, will be imputed to us for condemnation. It is only this righteousness that is justly precious in the judgment of God, and makes sinful men accepted with him.

Inference 1. Behold here the wonderful grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in thus representing his church and people to God. The apostle saith, 2 Cor. viii. 9. *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.* He supposeth, that all true Christians doth know Christ's grace: and justly; for God knows, and all men may judge them unworthy of that name, that do not know it. Christ's grace is a lovely theme to hear of, and to think on, by all that have tasted of it, and live by it. This grace shineth brightly in his representing his people to God for acceptance. It was a great condescendence of his grace, to take the office of a representer of his church. He knew his own divine dignity; he knew the vileness and unworthiness of them whom he was to represent: yet neither of them hindered his cheerful undertaking of this office. And as it was condescending grace in him to undertake it; so was it costly grace to him to go through with it, and discharge it. Blessed Jesus laid out all his estate (to speak so) to redeem the lawful captives of justice. Before they can be represented to God for acceptance, he must die, and shed his blood; and in his garments dyed with his own blood must he present himself as a perfected Mediator unto God, and in the same garments present his church to God for acceptance. This matter of our

acceptance with God is not brought about by the prayers of Christ on earth, nor by his intercession in heaven: though we are apt to think, that such prayers of such a supplicant might do any thing. Yea, any thing but this: *Without shedding of blood, there is no remission*, Heb. ix. 22. And no blood but Christ's goes for an atonement, Rom. v. 9, 10. He had no sin of his own. But when he was charged with the sins of his people, he must shed his blood as a sacrifice for propitiation. When Christ stands thus charged at the bar of justice, he was not spared, but was dealt with as strictly as another sinner. When law and justice takes a sinner by the throat, it saith to him, *Pay me that thou owest;* as Matth. xviii. 28. in the parable there. And this charge is still on all that are out of Christ; though they are now deaf, and do not hear it. This charge is on all the prisoners in hell, "Pay your "debts to God, or no getting out of prison. But this charge was only on Christ, "Pay what thou owest as surety for a "multitude of beggars and debtors. They have nothing to "pay; thou art rich, and able to pay. Thou hast under-"taken to pay; and therefore full payment must be made "ere thou enter into glory, and thy people be presented to "God with acceptance." And this charge Christ obeyed and answered, by which his church is saved. So great was his obedience to his Father's commandment, so great was his zeal for his own and his Father's glory, and so great was his love to his church, that he gave himself for it, Eph. v. 25, 26, 27. Now, as it is all Christians duty to behold this grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is their great advantage so to do; so the best find it no easy thing to believe it with application to themselves, so as to say, as in Gal. ii. 20. *Christ loved me, and gave himself for me.* For when they see a little of themselves, (and but a little is seen, and all bad), and a little of his glory, (and it is but a little of that that believers can see, with such bad eyes as the best have, and in so dark and distant a place as this is where we are); then they find it hard to believe, that Christ will clothe their filthy nakedness with that garment of salvation wove out of his own blood and bowels; and in it present them to God's favour and love, and to all the precious fruits of it. But for as hard as it is, all the true

worshippers in the New Testament temple are bound to believe, that their great High-priest, set over the house of God, doth represent them unto God for acceptance, far more really, (for that was but typically), and much more successfully, than Aaron did Israel in the solemn day of atonement. But it is as truly, as commonly, said, That such as think believing easy, know not what believing is.

Inference 2. Here we may see the excellent way of our acceptance with God. We are accepted in his Son Jesus Christ. The salvation we get upon our acceptance with God, and the blessed way in which this acceptance cometh, are equally to be beheld with wonder, and praise, and faith. This excellent way is the only way of a sinner's acceptance with God. There was another way; but that was of the acceptance, not of a sinner, but of a sinless man, with God. But that is gone. In commending this only way now, I would have you consider, that there have been two ways of man's acceptance with God, of God's making. One way was, that in the first Adam; that is past. The other is in the second Adam; this stands, and will remain for ever. There is also another way, of man's making, that is neither in the first, nor second Adam. This is a dream that the greatest part of mankind dream to hell in. They dream of it as long as they live; and when they die, and go to hell, they awake, and behold it was a dream: for neither the mourning of the law, nor the piping of the gospel, awakens them out of it, Matth. xi. 17. And this way is by a sinful man's own doing, and pleasing God. Of each of those a little.

1. The first way of man's acceptance was fixed in the first Adam, and in God's covenant with him. Obedience was required, and death threatened for disobedience. But God graciously furnished him with endowments sufficient for his work. The Lord by this way, did therein signify, that mankind should stand accepted with him as represented by their covenant-head. So in Rom. v. 14. the first Adam is called *the figure* (or type) *of him that was to come;* that is, Christ. The apostle is, from ver. 12. to the end of the chapter, shewing vast unlikeness, yea, contrariety betwixt these two heads of mankind: in what each did; obedience and disobedience;

in what they brought in; the first man brings in by his disobedience, sin, condemnation, and death; the second man brings in by his obedience, righteousness, justification, and eternal life: all as contrary as light and darkness, heaven and hell. How, and wherein is Adam then said to be the figure, the type of Jesus Christ? Is it not in this, that as the two were true men, and so they were single persons; yet they both were federal, covenant-heads, and representatives of a great many; Adam of all his natural offspring; Christ of all his spiritual offspring, given to him of the Father: And as the first Adam stood accepted with God in the righteousness of his obedience; so did his posterity stand on the same account. And if he had continued in his obedience, all his posterity had been accepted in him: but because he became by his fall a sinner, the first Adam became thereby a destroyer, and brought in sin and death on all his posterity, by the justice of the curse of the broken covenant; and hath the guilt of sin imputed, and the depraved nature which by his sin he contracted, propagated unto all his posterity. So that the best of saints is *conceived and born in sin*, Psal. li. 5.; and all are *by nature children of disobedience, and of wrath*, Eph. ii. 3. So this way is quite unpassable. A covenant betwixt a holy God, and a dead defiled sinner, was never intended by God: and it is dishonourable to God's holiness, and wisdom, and justice, to imagine any such covenant.

2. The other way of God's making, is, for the acceptance of sinful men by his Son Jesus Christ, and God's covenant with him for his redeemed offspring. If our Father Adam had stood as God had placed him, there had nothing been required of us, or needed by us, in order to the instating us in the favour and friendship of God; whatever had been needful for our continuing in it. His obedience, if continued, would have entailed and conveyed that to us in our several generations. So now in Christ, the second Adam, the favour of God was bought for us by him, (for it was lost by the first Adam); it stands in him, and is conveyed to us through him, when *the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, doth make us free from the law of sin and death*, Rom. viii. 2. Those are all the ways of God's making. But,

supposition of Adam's standing, sin had indeed been kept out; but the acceptance continued to Adam and his posterity, had had no better and nobler foundation than that of the obedience and righteousness of a creature, a mere man. But now believers in Christ stand accepted of God, in the obedience and righteousness of Christ, who is *God over all, blessed for ever*, so that every one of them may say, as Isa. xlv. 24. *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.* I own that this way stops all glorying in ourselves; but it is fitted for raising, and keeping up eternal glorying in the Lord, 1 Cor. i. 29,—31. It is not the least, but the greatest, rather, of the honour of the crown of glory in heaven, that the crown itself, and the kingdom, and the heirs of it, were all bought with the blood of the Lamb; and that their title to it now, and their possessing of it to eternity, hath no other, nor lower foundation, than the righteousness of God, the righteousness of a man, who is *the Lord our righteousness*, Jer. xxiii. 6. And thus God's *Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation*, Isa. xlv. 17.

2. This way is a more safe way and sure than Adam's way, or God's old way with Adam. The uncertainty of that way was seen in the event quickly. The stock of mankind was all in his hand: he was furnished with sufficient grace to keep him standing, (his case is enough to make us hate the popish distinction, and sense, of sufficient and efficacious grace, with reference to fallen man); but he was but a mere man, and was left to the freedom of his own perfect will, (enough to disgrace the false name of free will in a sinner, a slave to his will and lusts and a *captive to the devil at his will*, 2 Tim. ii. 26.) But it pleased God (and against that no man should reply) not to give him establishing, preserving grace. It seemed fit unto God, that establishing grace should only be dispensed in and by Jesus Christ, who was to restore fallen man, and to be the head of *a new and better covenant, of which Christ is Mediator, which was established on better promises*, Heb. viii. 6. Establishing grace was given to the standing angels. Christ is their head, Col. ii. 10.; and they are called *elect angels*, 1 Tim. v. 21. Now, if it had been asked Adam, or an angel, concerning him, How long shall Adam stand in God's fa-

vour? the only answer could have been, As long as he is obedient to his Maker and covenant-party. Ask again, How long shall Christ the Mediator stand in God's favour? It is answered, For ever: and it is impossible it should be otherwise. But if it again be asked, How long shall a believer in Christ, whom Christ hath represented to God for acceptance, how long shall he stand accepted! this hath several answers, but only one good one. And that is, A believer stands always accepted with God, as long as Christ is accepted with God as the representer. As long as the believer is represented by Christ, so long continueth the state of acceptance with God. Adam, in his first state, had all grace but establishing grace in his good state. The elect angels had it, and thereby stood, and do *always behold the face of Christ's Father which is in heaven*, Matth. xviii. 10. They need no other grace, but establishing grace, to keep them well when they were well. But Adam fallen, and all his offspring, need restoring grace to make them well, and more grace to make them better, and preserving grace to keep them unto the heavenly kingdom. All this grace is out of Christ's fulness, and secures the happy state of all that are in him.

3. By this way of our acceptance with God in Christ, a greater blessedness cometh unto men than could have come by Adam if he had stood. The first mention of eternal life is made after his fall, Gen. iii. 22. It is indeed a deep and dark text; but that I named it for is, That in it, *living for ever* is first named, which afterwards is so frequently promised in Christ to his church. To this that plainly relates, Rev. ii. 7. *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.* We need not trouble our heads about the extent of the blessings in the first covenant of God with Adam, and mankind in him. The Spirit of God speaks very little thereof: and that wisely; or why should he reveal blessings which noman was to partake of? But what is plainly revealed, is, that this covenant was utterly broke by Adam's sin; and by that breach, guilt, and wrath, and death, came in upon the world; for which the only relief is by Jesus Christ. The first dawning of which our first parents saw in that first gospel, Gen. iii. 15.

and expressed their faith of it in that worship which was appointed them, Gen. iv.; and they did recover the favour of God by this new way and covenant, which they had lost by their sin under the first. There was doubtless somewhat singular in that communion with God which our parents, and Abel, and who else of mankind were then born, had, that is called *the face of the Lord*, Gen. iv. 14. and *the presence of the Lord*, ver. 16. that the reprobate Cain counted it his misery and punishment to be banished from: for he thought, that when he was cast out of God's presence, he was also cast out of God's protection; and then was afraid, lest every man or beast might prove his executioner: and therefore God gave him a pass and a protection; which it is like was all he sought, or got. But now in Christ Jesus, and on the account of his righteousness, not only all the curse of the first broken covenant is removed, but greater blessings are conveyed to us, and bestowed on us, and a better paradise provided for us, than that which Adam sinned in, and was driven from. He sinned in it almost as soon as he was put in it; and was driven out of it as soon as he had sinned: and both of them concern and affect all us his posterity, as much as they did him. Sinners we are in and by his sin, and cast out of God's favour in and by his being cast out; and there is no relief for us but in Jesus Christ. But this relief is with vast advantage, Rom. v. 12,—21.

Examine then your hearts, how they stand affected towards this new and living way to the holiest of all by Jesus Christ. It is a good rule for one to judge his own state by; even by his true, fixed, and approved thoughts of Jesus Christ, as the only way to God's favour and friendship, 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. 1 Pet. ii. 7. How blind must that man be, who hath hopes of heaven, and hath no hearty favour and relish of God's only way to heaven? If men mind heaven and seek it, and hope for it in ways of their own devising, they are never a whit the nearer to it, nor the surer of it. That you may not be deceived now, and disappointed wofully at last, I would shew you some thoughts of mens hearts, that are common, sinful, and dangerous; that ye may beware of them.

1. Some say within themselves, and it may be to God too, "O that God would accept of me of his great mercy, and "look graciously on me!" And is not this a good wish? Is it not a frequent prayer of saints in the word? and is it not to be still used by all? Yes, all this is true. But it is only good when it is well meant: in many it is ill meant; and therefore is a faulty wish. All the mercy of God flows to men only in and by Jesus Christ. If Christ be forgot in your prayers, you can never put up one good one, nor get a good answer. The mercy of God without Christ, is a dream that the greatest part of the world dream to hell in; and all the while think they are in the right road to heaven. How oft have you heard, that there is no God to be savingly known, and rightly worshipped, but in Christ? and that there is no saving mercy to be found from God, but in Jesus Christ?

2. Some say, and think they say better, "O that God "would make me perfectly holy, that I may be accepted of "him!" Is not this a brave desire and prayer? True holiness is indeed an excellent blessing; a main part of the image of God in standing Adam, utterly lost and defaced in fallen man, renewed again by Jesus Christ in regeneration, and perfected in heaven. The study of holiness is an excellent study, and a study for all our days. We should be still perfecting of it, 2 Cor. vii. 1. but cannot in this life be perfect in it, Phil. iii. 12. Perfect holiness is an excellent aim and design, and is in the heart and eye of every one that is truly holy. Diligence, and continuance in it, and to grow in holiness, is a saint's best exercise; and success therein his choicest mercy. The holiest man on earth is surely the happiest man on earth: and the perfection of holiness in heaven, is a necessary constituent of the happiness of heaven. A patron of sin, a despiser of holiness, and he that desires but a little of it, hath not the Spirit of God. But for all this, there may lurk some evil thing in this wish for perfect holiness. To search it out, I would name a few things to you. 1. There is no true holiness but what is from Christ, who is *made of God unto us sanctification*, 1 Cor. i. 30. None are sanctified but *by faith in him*, Acts xxvi. 18. It is Christ's

image in them. All the moral virtues of the Heathen, for all their splendid lustre, had not any bit of true holiness in them. And so is it as to the morality that is so prized and praised by many. 2. As all that are truly holy, would fain be perfectly holy, (for no man is void of this desire, but such as would sin more, and love sin); so no man is truly holy, but he hath a mean and low esteem of his own holiness; and the most happy proficient in holiness, is surely the humblest saint. 3. Whenever holiness is sought to recommend us to God's acceptance, without faith in Christ, there is no holiness in that desire, nor will it ever be granted. For in this case the language of the heart is, "O that I were so "holy, that I might not need Jesus Christ!" What an ungodly wish is this? I hope you all abhor the thought of it.

3. It is also common with many to say, "O that God "would accept of me, and my good works and duties, for "Christ's sake!" Many poor creatures take pains to do all they can in obeying God's will; and when they find it is but little they do, and that also full of sinful mixture and imperfection, then they bring in Christ to help them out. But this is to abase, and to affront Christ: for Christ was never appointed to help men under the first covenant of works; but only to bring them out of it; and then save them by the new and better covenant, wherein the Mediator doth all the redeeming work for them by himself alone; and, by his Spirit given them, works in them what is pleasing in his sight. But this carnal wish of having our works accepted for Christ's sake, saith, 1. That the man thinks he can do something (and that is no small thing in this vain man's eyes) without Christ; contrary to the well-known word of his, John xv. 5. *Without me ye can do nothing*, spoken to and of them that were in him: and much more may it be said of them that are not in him. Yet there is hardly to be found a natural man, who thinks not but that he can do somewhat that pleaseth God, and may further his acceptance with God: but because it is not so much and so good as it should be, he would have help from Christ to make it better, and more effectual with God. But the bottom of all this is self. 2. Christ's righteousness was not wrought out by him, and

tendered to men in the gospel, as a clout, or patch, or ornament, to be put upon any one part of the shameful nakedness and deformity of a sinner, but as a perfect and entire garment for covering all. So that they that have it not all on them have none of it; and he that receiveth it not at all, and doth not trust alone to Christ's righteousness, as to the only screen from the holy justice of God, and the only ornament of beauty in God's sight, is still stout-hearted, and far from righteousness. 3. The acceptance of our service and obedience to God, is indeed a precious thing, and much desired by all sincere Christians; but the way it is got, is little known by many that seem earnest for it. The Lord's way is this: First, by Christ, and union with him, the believer's person is accepted of God; and then through Christ the fruits of his faith (as all true good works are) become accepted also. So in the beginning of the world, Gen. iv. 4, 5. when the two brothers offered their sacrifices, and both to the Lord, to the same true God, and the offerings in themselves lawful, and afterwards by the written law were required; yet it is said, that *the Lord had respect to Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect.* Wherein lay the difference between their offerings? Heb. xi. 4. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain; by which he obtained witness that he was righteous; God testifying of his gifts: and by it, he being dead, yet speaketh,* or *is spoken of.* And from distinguishing grace, as Abel was received and accepted; so Cain was enraged, and turned a murderer of his brother, 1 John iii. 12.; which made Luther say, that Cain hath been murdering Abel in all ages, to this day; that is, the zealots for the righteousness of works, do still hate and persecute the *heirs of the righteousness which is by faith,* as Noah is called in Heb. xi. 7.

But the only right breathing of the heart of one that truly knoweth and believeth this truth, That Christ is the only representer of his people unto God for acceptance, is that of Paul, in Phil. iii. 8, 9, 10. and it is in three things. 1. That he *might win* or *gain* Christ, ver. 8. Then he counts he is rich enough, and despiseth all losses, for this gain. 2. That he *might be found in Christ,* ver. 9. As if he had said, "I

"know the day is coming, when God the judge of all will "find out every man, and me also. My design and desire is, "that *I may be found in Christ;* and then I am sure I shall "be found in peace." But how would he be found in Christ? *Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law,* (I am afraid and ashamed of appearing before God in it); *but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith;* that righteousness which is of God's providing and accepting, that which is of Christ's working out, and which is applied and put on by faith. It is this righteousness the apostle desires to be found in, in order to his acceptance with God; and so will every person do that hath that spirit that Paul taught this doctrine by. 3. *That I may know Christ,* ver. 10. "If I win Christ, I am rich to-"wards God; if I be found in him, I am safe; if I know "him, I am wise to salvation." Blessed is that man or woman that feeleth in his or her heart, somewhat of that deep humility, strong faith, and warm love, which wrought in Paul's heart, when he, by the Holy Ghost, wrote these words. Then they would be easily and plainly understood. But when men know and feel nothing of themselves, and of their own unrighteousness, nor of Christ, and of his righteousness, no Christian should wonder at such mens blundering about, and mistaking of such evangelical expressions of faith in Jesus Christ, which shine as day to an exercised believer; while the unbeliever, though a master in Israel, can see no light in them, but *gropes as if he had no eyes, and stumbles at noon-day, as in the night;* as it is said in Isa. lix. 10.

So much for the two inferences from this doctrine.

I would now further apply this truth in two exhortations; one to unbelievers, and another to believers.

Exhort. 1. Unto unbelievers. Who are they? By unbelievers, we mean such as never had any business with Christ, to obtain by him acceptance with God for themselves. He is an unbeliever, call him by what name you will, that never employed Christ for representing him unto God for acceptance. Of such there are many sorts; passing what hath been said of some, that seek the acceptance of their works

not of their persons. Some beg communications of grace and mercy from God, and use not God's way of giving all, in and by Jesus Christ. Some beg the pardon of their sins, and the washing away of their defilements; but do not ask this, How shall a sinful man stand so beautiful in God's eyes, as that God may look on him, and not be angry; may look on him, and love him? That sort of pardon that many seek, is never given; and if given, would not answer the end. A mere pardon of sin, (if it were possible), without a garment of righteousness upon a man, might deliver him from wrath and hell; but would not make him lovely in God's eyes, nor entitle him to eternal life: for it is *grace that reigns to eternal life through righteousness, and that grace*, that *reign of grace*, that *righteousness*, and that *eternal life, are all by Jesus Christ our Lord*, Rom. v. 21. But true gospel-forgiveness, and the imputing of Christ's righteousness, are inseparable and indivisible.

Of those unbelievers are specially three sorts. 1. The secure, sleepy unbelievers; such as have no heart-concern about this matter; and never think in earnest how they shall stand accepted of God; nor of Christ's concern in procuring it, nor of their own concern in obtaining it by him. Such men are much like to that great man, though a blind Pagan, in Acts xxv. 19. *They had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.* Little did that poor Roman know, that he must perish for ever, if he knew not this Jesus, and the virtue of his death, and the power of his resurrection. As indifferent and careless are many sinners this day, that when they hear of Christ, and of the necessity of his righteousness to sinners for their acceptance with God, they are ready to say, That they are certain hard questions about things and persons that they have no concern with. Whether Jesus was dead or alive, whether the Jews or Paul was in the right; all was alike to Festus. So to many now, Whether a sinner can weave and work for himself a garment to stand accepted with God in? or, Whether he must have one made for him, and given to him by Jesus Christ, or perish for ever? are counted but questions for ministers and scholars, and such as they

have found it, and such know it best: but it is but little that the best of them can tell of it: and what the gospel declares of it, believers themselves rather admire at, than fully know, or firmly believe. If you have not found it yourselves, believe others have got this acceptance.

3dly, Consider how many Christ hath made highly accepted with God, who were just such as you be; as unworthy and vile as you are, or can think yourselves to be. What were the Corinthians, of whom the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11.? If the Holy Ghost had not written it, we would be ashamed to read over such a bed-roll of abominations: *Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.* (If it be so, what then shall become of them?) *And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.* Every instance of Christ's grace on great sinners, (and every age is filled with many of them), should be an encouragement to every sinner to put in for a share of the same grace whereof Christ hath so great an abundance, and as great a good-will to show it.

4thly, Consider that Jesus Christ never refused any sinner that employed him to do this great business with God for him. It is his proper office, he hath given his word and promise for it, John vi. 37. and vii. 37. And he hath been as good as his word to all that ever trusted in him; none of them were ever put to shame, Rom. ix. 33.

Let therefore hope come in, and spring up. Say, "Though "I see myself vile and lost as ever sinner was, or can be, out "of hell; though I can do nothing to relieve myself; yet "there is help in Christ; many have found it. I am com-"manded by God to come to him, and to the Father by him; "and therefore I will try and trust Christ in my forlorn state." Do so, and you shall prosper. Christ will undertake your cause and concern, and you shall quickly find the blessed fruits thereof. I shall conclude with an allusion to that passage in the gospel, Matth. xiv. 22, 30. and Mark vi. 46,—51. wherein we read, that Christ did send, yea, constrained his

disciples to go to sea without him. They meet with a contrary wind in this commanded voyage, and toil all night to little purpose. Our Lord knew their difficulty; and not only remembered them on the mountain at land, but made them a visit at sea, and that *walking on the sea;* and, doubtless, he that made both sea and land, could use either of them as he pleased. His *disciples saw him, and were troubled, saying, It is a spirit. They all saw him,* as in Mark vi. 50. *and were troubled;* for none of them knew him, but all mistook him, *and cried out for fear;* till he said, *Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid.* On this Peter, always a forward disciple, said, *Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.* Christ giveth the command, *Come.* Peter obeys: but *when he seeth the wind boisterous he is afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?* Christ saved him, and then rebuked him for his unbelief. Is not your condition somewhat like this? Christ cometh to you as on the waters, in the night, and in a storm; you are afraid of him: he calls you by the gospel to come to him; you essay it, but the winds and waves fright you. Cry to him, *Lord, save me.* Assure yourselves, that he that calleth you, will hear your drowning, dying cry; will stretch forth his hand, catch you, and save you; and then chide you kindly for your unbelief: yea, you will then chide yourselves for it, when you find (and find you will) that Christ is more merciful than you did or could imagine. How vastly doth the first experience of Christ's grace surpass all the desires and expectations of the first adventures and adventurers, upon Christ's tender heart, and on his mighty saving arm!

SERMON XIII.

JOHN xvii. 24.

Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

YOU have heard, that this is the third thing in the matter of Christ's prayer that I have been speaking to. Wherein I proposed to speak to two things: The glory of Christ; and his people's beholding of his glory. In speaking to the first of these particulars, I did confine my discourse unto Christ's glory, as he represents God unto his people, to be savingly known by them; and as Christ represents his people unto God, to be graciously accepted by him.

It is to the latter of these I have been speaking; and have made some entrance upon the application thereof, which I would now prosecute. Last day I spoke to unbelievers; the true name of many, who will never own it, till they *get their portion with them*, Luke xii. 46.; unless the Lord open their eyes to see their disease, and stretch forth his hand, and heal it. Faith is wrought, and acteth, where unbelief is seen, and bewailed, and prayed against. Mark ix. 24. *Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief*, said a new-begun man in faith. I ranked unbelievers into three sorts. 1. The secure and stupid unbeliever, that never saw and felt any quarrel betwixt God and him, nor any necessity of Christ as a Peace-maker. 2. The awakened and roused unbeliever, who begins to open his eyes, and to see the importance of salvation, the danger of God's wrath, and the bad state he is at present in. Such people, unless God's Spirit work true faith in them, do naturally betake themselves to themselves for relief. That great word spoke by the jailor, Acts xvi. 30. *What shall I do to be saved?* however it was meant by that distressed sinner, it hath been by many as much mistaken as the apostle's answer to it, in ver. 31. The true meaning is, "I am a lost undone creature,

" and have no help at home; if there be none abroad, I am quite " undone." And they take these words in vain, that use them, while they vain and proudly think, they can do something, if they did but know it. 3. There are discouraged, despairing unbelievers, that know that they are in a bad case, and cannot believe that it can ever be altered to the better. A very great sin, and too common. Many live, and die, and perish in despair, that go not down to the pit roaring. We think their case sad, that die in expressions of despair; and their case yet worse, that destroy their own lives in despair. And indeed this last case is exceeding dreadful, if they are themselves, and are not distracted. As to the former, there may be more charity due to such as have given good proof of their faith in their lifetime, though they die in a cloud, and utter heavy unbelieving complaints. Of which sort, I have heard of a Christian near death making a heavy complaint of the Lord's withdrawing from him in that season of his greatest need; and said, he " did not think that ever the Lord did so with any of " his children." The wise and happy minister to whom he made this complaint, gave him this answer: " Know ye not " that thus it was with the Son of God, when, on the cross, " a little before his death, he cried out, *My God, my God, why* " *hast thou forsaken me?*" Which words were so blessed, that the storm ceased, and the good man died in peace. But there is a silent despair in many unbelievers, that goes along with them many days and years, and they perish in it without noise or complaint. They inwardly think, that their state is bad, and they have no hope that it will ever be better. It is like an inward wound, that a man may bleed to death of, as well as of an outward one. But can Satan and unbelief prevail to that degree in a man not in hell, as to make a perishing sinner look on Christ's saving gracious face, and say, " Either thou " canst not, or will not help me?" No; Christ is surely out of that sinner's eye in whose heart despair hath the dominion. A glance of Christ's glory as a Saviour will expel despair, and beget and nourish faith in him. Never did a sinner see Christ's face, but he looks for some good from him, and that not a little also; and that never in vain.

Exhort. 2. That which remains, is to give two exhortations

to believers; though one of them will take up our time now. As I told you in the former exhortation who were unbelievers, so now I would tell you who are believers, that the exhortation may be rightly taken, and not snatched at by them to whom it doth not belong. By a believer in Christ, I mean a man that doth in heart and in experience know these two things: 1. He hath seen so much of the holiness of God, and strict purity of his law, and hath seen so much of his own vileness and impotence, that he doth despair of ever making himself accepted with God by any thing he hath or can do. And this sort of despair (if we may give so ill-sounding a name to so good a thing) is so far from being inconsistent with true faith, that no true faith in Christ can be, or be acted, without it. That sinner that hath any hopes of getting matters betwixt God and him mended without Christ, will never, and can never, believe on Jesus Christ. 2. A believer is one that hath so heard and so believed God's record concerning Christ in the gospel, and his ability and good-will to save sinners, as voluntarily and deliberately to lodge all his acceptance with God for salvation on Jesus Christ alone. He seeth it to be his only shift, and a good one too.

Unto such believers I would give these two exhortations from the doctrine: 1. Study, in the light of the word, and by the eye of faith, this glory of Christ in representing his people to God for acceptance. 2. Improve this truth by the activity of the same faith.

Exhort. 1. Study and behold the glory of Christ in representing his people to God. None see it once, but they will desire to see it again and again, and more and more of it. None see it rightly, but they wonder and admire at it; that not only our salvation is brought about by this representation, but that Christ's glory is great in making of it. Whenever a man seeth any thing of the glory of God, before whom the representation is made, any thing of the vileness of the persons represented, the divine dignity of Christ the representer, and the great acceptance the represented by him obtain of God; then will the man stand amazed, and cry out, "O the "depths of grace in saving lost man!" See Heb. i. 3.; where the apostle teacheth us three things concerning Christ; what

he is, what he did, and what he got. He is *the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person*, (of God the Father's glory and person), *and upholding all things by the word of his power*. The whole creation oweth its original to him, and is preserved by him, and his powerful word. Who can doubt his Godhead, that believes that these, and many such expressions, are indited by the Spirit of truth? Who would think what follows? This divine person, this equal with the Father, this creator and upholder of all things, when he comes into the world, what is his business? what doth he? *He by himself purged our sins*. His work was about sin and sinners, to purge sin, and to save sinners. Observe the phrase. It is not said, *by himself he made the world;* but only, that *God made all things by him*, as ver. 2. It is not said, that he *by himself upholds all things;* but only, he doth it *by the word of his power*. There is no need of the interposing of himself, or of his person, (if I may use the word); his word of command was enough to do both. But when our sins are to be purged, a word of power was not enough: himself must come in, and be a sacrifice; as Heb. ix. 26. *He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*. Nothing less was needful, nothing less craved by God offended by sin, nothing less offered by the Saviour of sinners. In and by this purging our sins, how low is this divine person the Son of God brought! But what became of him when he had done this work? *He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high*. He is high in his divine person, was brought low in his work, and is exceedingly exalted when he had done it; as in Phil. ii. 6,—11.

In order to the raising of your thoughts about this glory of Christ in representing his people unto God, I would offer you, 1. Some generals about it; 2. Some particulars in this chapter to the same purpose.

First, The generals about it shall only be these two: 1. Divine counsels about it. 2. Divine acts about it.

1. Divine counsels about this. It was the eternal purpose of God to have a remnant of Adam's offspring represented to his favour, and its fruits, by his own Son made man, and dying in their stead. This *eternal purpose was purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*, Eph. iii. 11. *His good pleasure which he hath*

purposed in himself, Eph. i. 9, 10. *It was in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ*, 2 Tim. i. 9, 10. It is unto this highest spring your faith must rise by all the lower steps it takes; even to the deep design of God in purposing salvation by Jesus Christ to his chosen. And it is revealed to us in the word as purposed by him, to the eternal praise of his grace, to the exalting of his Son Jesus, the undertaker of the work of saving, and to bring in a great salvation for his people.

2. What passed in time about this. In the fulness of time God sent his Son into the world. When he came, that was fulfilled, Isa. ix. 6. *Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.* He was born, and given to us; for he came to die, and to be given for us. On this I would offer four things.

1*st*, When our Lord came, and set about his work he came for, he looked on himself, preached and declared himself, to be a representer, by his office, of his people to God; that he was the sacrifice for sin and sinners, Heb. x. 5,—10.; that his flesh and blood was the meat that came down from heaven, which he must give for eternal life to his people, and that all must feed on by faith that had any mind to live, John vi. 35,—58. Yea, when he was first made manifest to Israel, John Baptist, the first preacher of Christ as come, preacheth and points him forth to be *the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*, John i. 29.; a Lamb for purity, a Lamb for sacrifice, and the Lamb of God, sent and provided by God, (as his type was, Gen. xxii. 8.), and acceptable unto God. But what was spoken in the ear in closets in Christ's time on earth, was proclaimed on house-tops (as he bid them, Luke xii. 3.) when Christ had done his work, and was gone to heaven. His apostles, and all his servants in all ages, have made it their business to set forth Christ as the only sacrifice for sin, and the only High-priest to introduce sinners into God's favour, in and by the virtue of his sacrifice. They have not begun to preach Christ rightly, that have not *first of all declared how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures*, 1 Cor. xv. 3.; and then of his resurrection, ver. 4. Ministers must neither leave Christ in his grave, nor preach a glorified Jesus, without remembering his death.

2dly, We find that the law and justice of God dealt with our Lord, when he was come, as with a representative of sinners. There was nothing in him, that justice and law should exact on him for; he owed no debt of his own contracting; yet law and justice dealt severely with him. The Lamb of God was without spot; yet his life must go, and his blood be shed for sin. There had been no justice in the Lord's bruising of his beloved and spotless Son, if he had not been answerable at the highest bar for the sins of others, for which he was stricken, Isa. liii. 8. In that chapter, (in which it is something strange that a Jew cannot see Jesus; but far more, that any that bear the name of Christians, should make the eunuch's question, Acts viii. 34. *I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?* and will not take Philip's answer, ver. 35. who from *that scripture preached unto him Jesus*), in that of Isa. liii. we have the prophet preaching Christ like an apostle, concerning his work, his death, the cause and fruits of it, with New Testament brightness and glory; and this several hundreds of years before Christ came into the world. I shall touch at a few things in it that belong to my present purpose. In ver. 4. *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.* Every man is not charged with the sorrows of others, except in common sympathy, which all owe towards others in distress. Christ not only had this, but a near and close feeling of, and pressure by them, that was proper to him only: yea, he bore the sorrows of many, whose sorrows were over before he came, and of far more, whose sorrows were not begun, long after he came to bear them. Yet ye did bear them to save them; for that grief and sorrow that men have, which Christ did not bear, will be everlasting sorrow. But what had Christ to do with their sorrow? In verse 5. *He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.* His wounds and bruises were very heavy, but not without a cause; only the cause is strange: they were for *transgressions*, for *iniquities;* but these were none of his, but ours. The wounds were his; but the sin was ours, that deserved the blows. And thus our peace, our healing cometh. But what had Christ to do with our iniquities? ver. 6. *The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us*

all. And he took the burden on him, and was only able to bear it, and did bear it away. The Lord hath resolved, that sin and sorrow shall go together. So was it with the Saviour; if sin be laid on him, sorrow shall follow it. So is it with sinners; their sin will bring dreadful sorrow, except Christ take away both. Sirs, you have formerly known, or do at present, or shall hereafter know, what a heavy burden sin is; how insupportable it is; and how surely that soul must sink into hell, that hath this burden lying on himself. And indeed, until the burden of sin be felt to be too heavy for them, and a burden that all the world cannot bear for them, men will think lightly of Christ's undertaking, and will never employ him, but in a compliment. Know this, and accordingly chuse your course: It is resolved in heaven, and declared in the gospel on earth, that every sinner's iniquity shall either be borne by the sinner himself, to his eternal damnation, or by the surety, Jesus Christ, to the believer's eternal salvation. But well did the prophet preface to this doctrine, ver. 1. *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* This gospel-doctrine will never be welcome to an unbeliever; and none are made believers but by the revealing of the arm, and putting forth of the power of the Lord upon their hearts. Till then, sinners will mock God, both in their contracting the debt of sin, and in their devices of paying that debt; and both are very sinful work. God hath fixed his way of satisfying his justice, and will not alter. Men must either betake themselves to Jesus Christ by faith, or lay their account with hell. That sinner is blind, and ignorant of God's justice, and of the strictness of his law, that thinks that sin against God can be expiated by any thing, but the blood of him that is God. And he that dare not trust to the sufferings and virtue of Christ's atonement made for sin, knows not God's mercy, nor *the truth as it is in Jesus*, Eph. iv. 21. Let all sinners therefore take heed, what course they take in the matter of the burden of sin. Take heed, that you mock not God in studying to pay it in false coin. All your own, all creature coin, is but reprobate metal in heaven's court and kingdom. It may pass on earth, and in a deluded conscience: but how little doth

that signify? and how short while will that little last? It is but hay and stubble, which Christ hath many fires to burn it up with. But for Christians, I advise you, in reading the prophets and apostles, concerning Christ and his sufferings, to make use of this as a key to open up all, as a light that enlightens all, That all the sufferings of Christ were laid on him, and endured by him, and presented unto God, as he did represent his guilty people; otherwise justice could not exact on him, nor his people be saved by them. See how Christ expresseth this in the celebration and institution of his last supper. He *taketh, blesseth, breaketh,* and *giveth bread,* and calls it, *my body given for you. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you,* Luke xxii. 19, 20. I do not mind the Antichristian synagogue, (for a church it is not, but in an usurped name, or in a vain notion), who have abused and perverted these plain and easy words, more than devils or men did ever pervert any words of God or man before; and have, upon that abuse of them, set up the grossest idol that ever a Heathen worshipped; for such as worship sun, and moon, and the host of heaven, have God's glorious workmanship before their eyes; yea, the Egyptians garden and herb gods are preferable greatly to a bit paste, knead and baked by a baker in his oven, conjured into a pitiful godhead by the mumbling of a priest, and first worshipped, and then swallowed down as other food, by the besotted people. Nothing less than the dreadful wrath of God can be in mens believing this lie, that the man's reason and all his senses militate against, 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12. But many that are not infected with this strong delusion, understand no more by Christ's words in this sacred ordinance, than that the bread and wine, so used as Christ appointed, do signify the sufferings unto death of our Lord Jesus Christ, cruelly handled by wicked men, and severely dealt with by the justice of God; but the cause and end of his death, they mind not. This Christ puts us in mind of, in these words: "For you, and for "your sins, and for the remission of them; you, and your "sins, are the cause of my death; and my death is the cause

"of your forgiveness." Christians, if you keep out that word, *for you;* if your faith do not echo to Christ *for you*, with you or *for me*, I assure you, that the bread and wine on the Lord's table, and the same creatures on your own table, will be of equal signification, as to soul-nourishment; and that is, none at all.

3dly, We find, that when Christ had thus been dealt with, as representing his people, there was a high acceptance of his sacrifice. The Father that put him to all this, was mightily pleased with him, and with his death. Here behold the depth and mystery of God's saving men by Jesus Christ. God's justice against sin squeezed out Christ's life, and by that squeezed out eternal salvation for them he died for. Here is wisdom, and here is love, 1 John iv. 8, 9, 10.

4thly, Hence it is, that all believers on Christ are graciously accepted with the Father. Whenever this blood shed for them, is sprinkled on them; whenever the virtue of this blood is applied to them by his Spirit, and applied unto by their faith, they are represented to God in it and with it, and are therefore accepted.

Secondly, Let us, in the next place, look into this chapter, John xvii. and learn something of Christ's representing his church and people unto God. It is as fit a portion of the word, as any for that end; and in it I would look to two things: 1. What is in it about Christ, the representer. 2. What of his people, whom he represents in this solemn address to his Father.

1. About Christ, the representer, we find these things:

1*st*, Our Lord notes the time in which he was to do his great work he came into the world for: *Father, the hour is come*, it is at hand: "the hour of my dying for my sheep." John xii. 27. *Now is my soul troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour*. As if our Lord had said, "I should lose my main end "I came into the world for, if it was not for this hour." This was that special hour, in which Christ was to make the grand representation unto God, of all his people for their redemption, and of all their sins for their expiation. This was Christ's dying-hour, and the church's redemption-hour.

2dly, Our Lord prays for the united and mutually-influencing glory of the Father and of the Son: ver. 1. *Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.* As he prayed, John xii. 28. *Father, glorify thy name*, and was answered, *I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again;* and as he foretold it, John xiii. 31, 32. *Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.* What is this glorifying he prays for? It is of large extent. "Glorify thy "Son, in making him a sacrifice; glorify him, in accept-"ing the sacrifice; glorify him, in slaying him; glorify him, "in raising him from the dead; glorify him, in exalting him, "and making him head over all things to the church, his "body, his fulness," Eph. i. 20,—23.: and all this, *that thy Son also may glorify thee;* "may glorify thy justice and thy "law, in satisfying both by my blood; may glorify thy grace "and mercy to thy chosen, by redeeming them unto God by "my blood; and may glorify thy wisdom, in contriving this "way of redemption, which is to be accomplished by my "death, the hour of which is come."

3dly, This that our Lord desires of his Father, was according to the everlasting covenant: ver. 2. *As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him*, "Thou hast given him universal "power and dominion, but a particular charge of the elect; "to them he is to give eternal life, in and by this redemption-"hour now come."

4thly, See how our Lord nameth this eternal life which he was to give, and they that were given unto him were to receive: ver. 3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* A most spiritual description of eternal life given by the author of it. It is begun in the saving knowledge of the Father and of the Son, and in the begun fruits of that knowledge. Eternal life is perfect in the perfect knowledge of the Father and Son, and in its perfect fruits; as in Eph. iv. 13. 1 John v. 20. and John xiv. 20.

5thly, Our Lord, in ver. 4. giveth a faithful account of his discharge of the work his Father had given him to do: *I have*

glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work thou gavest me to do: all but dying: which he was now as ready and willing to do, as any thing he had done before.

6*thly*, and *lastly*, Christ prays again (what he had prayed for in ver. 1.) in ver. 5. *And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine ownself, and with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*

2. Let us see what Christ saith here of his people, whom in this prayer he represents to his Father. It is to be undoubted by all Christians, that this prayer of Christ doth as really concern all believers in all ages, as it did the apostles themselves. And this Christ tells us in ver. 20. *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.* It is the prayer of our great High-priest; and all his Israel were on his heart in making of it, and reap the blessing of it.

In it, as concerning them, we find,

1*st*, Our Lord names them rightly, ver. 6. They *are the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them*, ver. 9, 10. Well doth the good Shepherd know, and count, and tell his flock; and he seeth his Father's mark of election upon them, and his own mark of redeeming blood on them; and therefore he cares for them, and prayeth for them, and giveth them eternal life, John x. 28, 29.

2*dly*, Christ tells all the good he can of them, and covers their failings: *They have kept thy word*, ver. 6. *Now have they known, that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee*, ver. 7. *For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me*, ver. 8. How poorly had they received Christ's word? How weak and staggering was their faith? and how oft had Christ reproved them sharply, for their unbelief, and other faults? Yet not a word of those in Christ's representing them to his Father. They had spoke one good word in John xvi. 30. *Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth*

from God. This Christ remembered, and tells it to his Father, in ver. 8.; but not a word of what he said to them, John xvi. 31, 32. *Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone.* This is the constant gracious way of our High-priest: He makes no mention of his Israel's faults in heaven, but for their expiation, 1 John ii. 1, 2.; whatever reproof and correction he sends to humble his people, and to amend them, Rev. iii. 19.

3*dly*, Christ doth here represent his people to God, his Father, with their necessities and dangers, and prays for help and supply: *They are in the world*, ver. 11. *The world hateth them*, ver. 14. There is evil in the world, that they are endangered by, ver. 15.; and therefore prays for their preservation, ver. 11, 15. and sanctification, ver. 17. To be kept from evil, and to increase in true holiness, are the main blessings believers need till they come to heaven. So Paul's faith acted, 2 Tim. iv. 18. *For the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom.* So he prays for others, 1 Thess. iii. 13. *To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints.*

4*thly*, Christ doth here declare to his Father, that his undertaking and sufferings were for his people's sake: ver. 19. *And for their sakes do I sanctify myself.* Christ needed no such sanctification as his people do, and as he giveth unto them, by the virtue of his death, by his Spirit. His sanctifying of himself, is his separating and devoting himself to death, as a sacrifice for his people. And in this sense a very learned foreign divine understands that dark word in Heb. x. 29. *And hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing*, or common thing: whereas commonly it is taken, as if the apostate had been ever in some sense sanctified by the blood of the covenant. This learned expositor doth natively enough from the Greek text take this *he* that was sanctified by the blood of the covenant, to be but another name of the Son of God, who is trodden under foot by such desperate apostates. So that the sense is plain and easy, and a great aggravation of their apostacy, that they not only de-

spise the Son of God, but also his sacred blood by which himself was sanctified, and the covenant confirmed unto his people, and made to be his testament and last will. To this same purpose is that other word of the same apostle, Heb. xiii. 20. *The God of peace brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.* So that the apostle in Heb. x. 29. describes this dreadful apostasy in three things: open contempt of the person of the Son of God; contempt of his sacred redeeming blood, the only price of redemption; and despite to the Spirit of grace, that works by the gospel on mens hearts. Such must fall into the hands of the living God, who lives to revenge such bold affronts done to the most gracious and only saving appearances of God unto men; that is, in his Son, and his blood, and in his Spirit, by the gospel. All is openly and deliberately contemned and despited by such wretches; and they must perish. And though it be hard to make an application of these sad brands of ruin to any man in particular, or sort and body of men; yet this I may venture to say, that open blasphemers of the Son of God, (as all are that count him a mere man); all that count the blood of the covenant a common thing, (as they must do that count it but the blood of a mere man); and all that do despite unto the Spirit of grace; such, I say, if they have been once enlightened, as Heb. vi. 4. and have had the Spirit of grace striving with them, and if this contempt of such sacred things of God be in malice, have far more reason (though I know that such have no inclination) to fear their interest in this dreadful scripture, and in such like, than any of the poor souls, who, upon their falling from their first love, and first works, or on their falling into some gross conscience-wasting sin, have applied this awful sentence unjustly to themselves. But all such are far from it, to whom the Son of God, and his redeeming blood, and his Spirit of grace, are sacred and adorable, though they have no comfortable view of their interest therein at present: for though the case of such be sad, yet there is a door of hope for them, in renewing repentance and faith.

But, to return again unto the exhortation given unto believers, to consider this glory of Christ in representing his church

unto God, I would offer a few things to engage them in the studying of it.

1. Consider the necessity of this representation made by Christ, in order to the acceptance of sinners with God. Christ saw this necessity when he undertook the office. No sacrifice but that of himself was required; no high-priest but himself was called, or able to offer what was effectual to satisfy the justice of God, and to save sinners, Heb. x. 5,—10. A sinner must see the necessity of this representation, which Christ only can make unto God; or he will never renounce all vain shifts of his own, and betake himself only unto this. And a believer must see the necessity of this representation made by Christ, that he may admire it more, and trust to it only.

2. Consider the glorious excellency of this representation that Christ makes of his church unto God. Glorious in itself, glorious in its fruits and ends. It is the ministration of righteousness, that exceeds in glory: 2 Cor. iii. 10, 11. *For even that which was made glorious, had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.* And all this glory is in the face of Jesus Christ, *who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,* and that for two ends: *That no flesh should glory in his presence; and that he that glorieth, might glory in the Lord,* 1 Cor. i. 29, 30, 31. If a man could have any saving wisdom but in and from Christ to know God and the way to heaven, he would glory in that; if he had any justifying righteousness to stand accepted before God in but Christ's, he would glory in that; if he had any sanctification but what is derived from Christ as its root and fountain, he would glory in that; if there was any redemption but what Christ the only Redeemer brings in, he would glory in that: yea, so proud, and so inclined is flesh to glory in God's presence, that sinners do vainly hunt after, and as vainly imagine they have attained some matter of glorying before God. But, saith the apostle, "Christ is so made of God unto "us, as to cut off all pretensions to any glorying but in the Lord." So that a Christian, when he finds he is made wise to salvation, must say, "This is from Christ:" when he seeth any justifying righteousness upon him, wherein he stands safe and

accepted before God, he must say, "This is none of mine "but Christ's righteousness:" when he finds any sanctification in him, in his heart, and way, and worship, he must say, "This is but a few droppings from the fountain Christ; a "little of the ointment that was poured in all fulness on my "High-priest Jesus:" when he gets any piece of redemption, or acts his faith and hope on complete redemption, all his acknowledgments, and all his expectations are, and must singly center in Christ the Redeemer. Yea, the Spirit of God expresseth this thing most strongly. He saith not, that Christ is made unto us the prophet and teacher, and giver of wisdom; nor the justifier, and bringer in of righteousness; nor the sanctifier, nor the Redeemer; all which are true of Christ, and of God's making him to be, and oft spoken of him in the word: but he is made unto us the things themselves, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption.* All of these are in Christ, and nothing of any of these is out of him. Wisdom out of Christ, is damning folly; righteousness out of Christ, is guilt and condemnation; sanctification out of Christ, is filth and sin; redemption out of Christ, is bondage and slavery.

3. I would commend the considering of Christ's glory in representing his church unto God, from the profit and advantage believers do receive by this exercise. I believe most of you would answer this question, What is the best exercise, and thought of the heart? Surely it is that that hath most grace in it. Now, what are the best graces of the Spirit? Are they not repentance, faith, and love? And all those, in their lively acts and exercises, do natively flow from the right studying of Christ's representing of us to God for acceptance.

1*st*, Repentance. What do you take it to be? There is too little of it with many professors, and that because it is not well known in its true nature. Many take repentance to be that that is little better than what the devils have. We read of their faith and trembling, James ii. 19.; and this is a greater length than many are got, who are angry if they be not called good Christians. Repentance is not a bare fit of sorrow and shame for sin committed, nor fear of God's wrath for sin. This may be in ungodly men. Few malefactors go to the gallows without somewhat of this. Cain, Pharaoh, Saul, Judas

had this. But true repentance unto life, though it may begin with a discovery of some particular sin or sins, that God sets in order before a man's eyes, Psal. l. 21.; yet it is not *godly sorrow that worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of*, 2 Cor. vii. 10. till the sinner look upon himself as so loathsome and abominable in the sight of God, that it becometh one of the greatest riddles and mysteries unto him, how such a God and such a sinner should ever be made friends; how God can look on him without abhorrence; and how such a sinner can stand before this holy God with favour and acceptance? And when the glory of Christ as the Peace-maker is discovered to, and seen by him in this case, and when he is drawn to trust to it, this faith is acted in the sight and sense of his own vileness in himself. They are unhappy people, and unskilful teachers, who take up *repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*, Acts xx. 21. and think of them, and study to act them, as if they did interfere with one another; as if repentance were the fruit of the law, and faith the fruit of the gospel; as if they could be acted separately and apart. All gross mistakes. There is no saving grace in our heart, but is Christ's work by his Spirit blessing the gospel. Repentance without faith, is the devil's repentance; and faith without repentance is the hypocrite's faith. If they be true, they go together; if rightly acted, they act together. And as this sense of sin and self-vileness is inseparable from first believing, so it continueth in all the life of faith, in all true growing believers. David dieth with the acting of repentance and faith, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

2dly, Faith in Jesus Christ. Bring true faith unto a narrow point, to that act in which its nature doth properly stand. For faith is a large comprehensive grace, much spoke of in the word, more talked of than acted by many; and least known, and most mistaken by them that have it not. This faith I speak of, is not a bare believing, or giving an assent unto divine truth, upon the evidence of a divine testimony; nor is it believing and expecting of good from God, upon the ground of his faithful promise; though these are acts of true faith. But faith in Jesus Christ, in its closest, nearest nature, acts thus. The self-condemned sinner, lothsome in his own sight, and

persuaded that as he is in himself, he is far more lothsome in God's sight, doth, on the gospel-call and promise, try, and trust Jesus Christ for making him, accepted with God. This is proper believing, Gal. ii. 16. And according as the measure and degree is of our knowledge of sin in us, and of the law's condemning of us for sin; and as the measure is of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; so is the measure of that faith that seeth our need of, and taketh up the glory and safety in Christ's representing us to God for acceptance, and that trusts to it.

3dly, The heavenly and everlasting grace of love, that is planted in the heart of a believer, and is nourished by the grace of the new covenant, that groweth in true Christians as the new creature doth, and is the only grace that the glorified act in heaven. Other graces of the Spirit are the Christian's armour, that is laid aside when they get the perfect victory. Now, what raiseth love to Jesus Christ to the hottest flame? Is it not when Christ's loveliness in himself, and when his love to us, is best seen by us? And are not both most conspicuous in this matter of his gracious representing us to God, covering us with his own righteousness wrought out for us by his precious blood shed, counted to us freely by his grace, and intitling us to the love of God, and to all the great fruits of that love?

It follows to speak of the second exhortation to believers; but that I shall leave to the next occasion. Only, to press the first, the duty of studying in your hearts Christ's glory in representing his church unto God. I would add four things.

1. By this representation that Christ makes of you that are believers unto God, *you that were enemies are reconciled unto God.* Col. i. 20, 21. You are beloved of God. Not only there is no condemnation to you that are in Christ, Rom. viii. 1.; not only are your sins blotted out, and your natural deformity covered from the eye and hand of law and justice, by the covering of Christ's righteousness; but you are so adorned with that garment, that the Father loves you; as Christ tells believers, John xvi. 27. *For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.* You are not only saved from wrath, and the curse of

the law; but possessed of God's love, and have a sure right and title to glory, by this grace of Jesus Christ that is come unto you.

2. By this representation of you unto God, you are made as accepted of God as ever any believer was. This many do not rightly understand; and therefore are ready to reproach it. There are degrees of grace on earth, and there may be degrees of glory in heaven; but neither here nor there are there any degrees of acceptance. Accepted, or not accepted, divides and distinguisheth all mankind in both worlds. Acceptance with God relates to a man's state before God, and not to his frame. We say not, that every or any believer is so good a believer, or so great a saint, as Paul; but yet every true believer, as to the state of his person, is as accepted as Paul was as to his personal state. The reason is this: The acceptance of all believers with God, is only on the account of this representation made by Christ for them unto God. And this is made by Christ for all equally: all the tribes of Israel are equally on the heart and breast-plate of our great High-priest Jesus Christ. And thus we find in that triumph of faith, Rom. viii. 31,—39. all God's elect are included; and the grounds of that triumph lie equally fair for any believer: *Christ is given, and hath died, and risen again, sitteth at the right hand of God, and maketh intercession for them.* Every believer may say so as well as Paul, though we cannot say so with as strong faith as Paul had. The ground is the same, and common to all believers; but they do not equally build upon this foundation. If our state of acceptance did stand on any thing believers themselves have, or do, and not singly on what Christ hath done, and daily doth for them; then indeed all believers, who differ so much from others in their inherent grace, and in the improvements, exercise, and fruits thereof, could not be alike accepted.

3. You that are believers, you are, even now, as much accepted of God as ever you shall be. I say not, that you enjoy God as much; that you are as near, and as like to him, as ever you shall be; but that you are as much accepted as ever you shall be. Believers are not called to glory, nor brought unto it, for acceptance. That is passed, and fixed for eter-

nity, as to all in Christ by faith, before they come there. Only their acceptance in that day is more gloriously declared and proclaimed than it was on earth, Matth. xxv. 34. And the fruits of that acceptance will be bestowed by the Lord, and enjoyed by the glorified in heaven, vastly beyond what believers can know, receive, or enjoy on earth. A state of acceptance in Christ Jesus, is the common privilege of all believers. He is all in all to all of them without difference, Col. iii. 11. And as it admits of no difference in them that are in him, and represented by him for it; so it admits of no gradations nor increase in any one believer, save as to the evidence, comfort, and fruits of an accepted state. And after building by faith on Christ the foundation, all the remaining work of a Christian stands in seeking after those blessings that flow from our state of acceptance with God by Jesus Christ.

4. I will adventure to add, in the last place, that which to some seems a hard saying; but it is not so hard in itself, when rightly understood, as some would make, or mistake it. And it is this, That a believer on Christ, and represented by Christ unto God's acceptance, is as accepted of God as Christ the representer is. The same acceptance that Christ the Mediator hath with God, the same acceptance is given to all believers. See John xvii. 23. *That the world may know that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.* Ver. 26. *I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them.* If we consider Christ and his people asunder and apart, then there is as great a difference betwixt Christ in himself, and his people in themselves as is betwixt light and darkness, righteousness and unrighteousness, Christ and Belial. But if we consider Christ the head, and his church his body, as one, and inseparably united in this mystical representation before God; then the divine acceptance on this representation is one and the same towards the representer and the represented: as Aaron the High-priest's was within the vail in the holy of holies, and all Israel's without the vail, on the day of atonement. The high-priest was accepted as representing all Israel, and all Israel accepted as represented by him. Indeed

the difference was very great betwixt the Old Testament type and shadow, and the New Testament substance. But all that difference is only to the greater glory of our *great High-priest, the Son of God, who is passed into the heavens*, Heb. iv. 14. and ix. 24. and to the greater advantage of his spiritual Israel without the vail, Heb. ix. 13, 14. The same acceptance the Father giveth to his Son, Mediator, the representer of his people, falls on all those for their happiness that are represented by him. And it is to be feared, that such as cannot receive this truth, have a secret respect to some other way and sort of acceptance with God than that that comes by Christ's representing them to God. And the danger of such delusions, is as great as their souls are worth.

SERMON XIV.

JOHN xvii. 24.

Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

TWO greater, deeper, and larger themes, are not in God's word, than these; the glory of Christ, and the beholding of this glory by his people. They are such as cannot be fully known by any on earth; yet it is very useful to Christians to be exercised in the study of them while they are here.

On the first of these, the glory of Christ, I have spoken at some length, under these two heads: 1. Christ's glory, as he represents God to his church, to be savingly known by them; and, 2. His glory, as he represents his church to God, to be graciously accepted by him. The former I have finished, and would dispatch the latter at this time. After I had handled the doctrinal part, I made some application; and in that spoke to one exhortation to believers, to study, in the light of the gospel, with the eye of faith, the glory of Christ in his repre-

senting his people unto God for his gracious and eternal acceptance.

Exhort. 2. I come now to the second exhortation to believers; which is, That they should improve, by the activity of their faith, this glory of Christ. There is nothing sweeter to the eye of faith than this glory of Christ, and nothing more useful to a believer than to have his faith well exercised about it. This glory of Christ in representing, as our High-priest, his church unto God, is a matter of pure revelation. It had never been known, unless it had been revealed. All truths that are of pure revelation, can only be managed by faith. When a truth is discoverable by reason, it is also improveable by reason. But if the truth transcend reason, and the discovery of it is made only by divine revelation, the right improvement of that truth can only be made by faith grounded on that revelation, and that faith wrought by the Spirit of the revealer, Matth. xvi. 17. This truth about the glory of Christ, is not only of pure revelation, but is *the great mystery of godliness*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. *And in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, Col. ii. 3. In the improving of this truth, faith only can do any thing to purpose; and there is much work for faith in the using of it. I shall therefore on this exhortation handle these two things: 1. In what cases specially believers ought to use and improve Christ's representing them to God's acceptance. 2. In what way and manner they should improve it in all or any case.

First, In what cases specially believers ought by their faith to improve this glorious representation of them unto God. I shall name some particular cases.

1. Be careful to improve this glory of Christ, in all your daily approaches to, and appearances before God. Whenever you come to the court of heaven, and into the presence of the great King, forget not him that only must introduce you, and make your address acceptable: Heb. x. 19, 21, 22. *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.* The apostle is writing unto Christian Hebrews, who were well acquainted with the Old Testament sanctuary and worship; and he speaks to them in that dialect. They knew what the holiest was in that dispensation; and that the

high-priest alone, and but once a-year, and not without blood, might enter into it, Heb. ix. 7. And this holiest to us in the New Testament, is *heaven itself*, Heb. ix. 24.; into which our *High-priest is entered by his own blood*, Heb. ix. 12. and made an entrance for his people: *For the way to the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing*, Heb. ix. 8. Christ by his blood made an open door to heaven, and by that door we must always enter, and *climb up by no other way, lest we be as a thief and a robber*, John x. 1, 8. What is the blood of Jesus? It is the blood of the Son of God: the blood of him, as a sacrifice offered up by him as our High-priest, for the sins of his people; the blood whereby he brought in that everlasting righteousness in which all his people stand accepted before God. Now, saith the apostle, that privilege that only the high-priest under the law had, of entering into the typical holiest of all by the blood of the typical sacrifices, every believer in Jesus Christ hath now under the gospel, and hath a daily entrance into the true holiest of all by the blood of the true sacrifice, Jesus Christ. And he adds, in ver. 20. *By a new and living way* (or a new slain and living way) *which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh.* We need not a door of entrance into heaven only, but a way to walk in. And that way is provided by Christ, and he is it; as John xiv. 6. And Christ as slain, hath by his death consecrated it for us; like that in John xvii. 19. *For their sakes sanctify I myself.* The apostle calls Christ's flesh, *the vail*, alluding to the vail of the sanctuary, Heb. ix. 3. through which the high-priest passed into the holy of holies. There was a double use of the sanctuary-vail. It kept the holiest of all from being seen by all the people, and yet made an entrance for the high-priest through it unto the holiest of all. So is the vail of Christ's flesh; it vails and hides his divine glory, as Phil. ii. 6, 7. and yet it gives a passage into the glorious presence of God unto believers. What more is needful for a believer's access and acceptance? ver. 21. *And having an high-priest over the house of God.* We not only wanted a door, and a way, but an authorised introducer into heaven. And Christ is all. He is the High-priest, who by his office is the introducer,

"more, but curse thee to thy face." Impudent slanderer, and a lying prophet! God, to try Job, and to make the devil a liar, gives the devil a permission. He readily useth it: and Job is made a poor man in one day; but blesseth God in taking, as well as in giving, ver. 21. Yet Satan gives not over; but, in chap. ii. 5. begs one trial more of Job, on his body. It is also given, and yet not successful, ver. 9, 10. though strengthened by his wife's bad words. It is a sad, but true name of the devil, in Rev. xii. 10. *The accuser of the brethren, which accuseth them before our God day and night.* They are brethren, God is their God; but yet Satan will be the accuser of them before their God. There is little or no doubt to be made, but that the devil knows who are truly godly. Such a watchful and cunning jailor as he is, cannot be ignorant when any of his prisoners are rescued by Christ, and make their escape, 2 Tim. ii. 26.: and though he know not the hearts of men immediately and perfectly: yet having so much craft, and long experience, and intelligence, in ways unknown to us, of what is in mens hearts, how can we think that his works should be destroyed. 1 John iii. 8. and Christ's new work begun in the heart of a man, and the devil know nothing of it? But as to Christians advancing in godliness, Satan knows and hates them, and they know him and resist him. Sirs, there is not a Christian amongst you so strong in grace and experience, but the devil can draw such a picture of you by his hellish art, from what he knoweth of God and his law, and from what he knows of your heart and ways, and can set it before your eyes, so as to confound you, if the Lord do not seasonably interpose for your relief. And it is this the devil drives at: that if he cannot hinder the believer's salvation, (as it is certain he cannot; and it is most probable he knows that he cannot), he may yet disturb his peace: for this picture and representation of a poor believer is so artfully drawn, and so cunningly exposed, that when the man seeth it, he is ready to think and say with horror, "This is "the picture of a devil, rather than of a man, or of a Chris-"tian." Take all the evil that is in the best, and expose that; and hide all the good that is in him, as if it were not, (and this is Satan's way), and you do then expose a hateful

object. Now, this truth of Christ's representing his people unto God, is of great comfort to a believer; for by faith he may say, "My blessed Advocate in heaven giveth another account of me, than my malicious accuser from hell doth; and I will trust to the one, and despise the other."

2*dly*, The world misrepresents believers. The world hates them, because Christ is kind to them, John xv. 19. We are forbid to marvel at it, 1 John iii. 13. And because the world hates them, *therefore they say all manner of evil falsely against the godly*, Matth. v. 10, 11, 12. And thereupon we are bid *rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for so they persecuted the prophets before us*, and the apostles, yea Christ himself. How little did Paul care for the world's opinion of him? 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4. *With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; he that judgeth me, is the Lord.* "I stand at his bar, and depend upon his sentence, and trust to his approbation."

3*dly*, The law makes a representation of believers, that they must not receive, but set Christ's representation against it. Whoever seeth his own face in the glass of God's holy law, seeth a hateful spotted face: *For by the law is the knowledge of sin*, Rom. iii. 20. Now, if a believer think, that just as he seeth himself in this clear glass, so doth he appear in the presence of God, that were dreadful indeed. But there is another representation that Christ makes of them unto God, that the law knows not of. The more a man knows of the law, the more he knows of his own sin and danger. And this sad condition remains, till he look beyond and above the law, unto the righteousness of Christ, who hath satisfied and fulfilled the law by himself, and makes this over to a believer, and represents him to God, as clothed with it.

4*thly*, Believers themselves are often misrepresented by believers also. Blessed be God, that his thoughts of us are not as mens are. Such men that seek after, and value themselves upon good mens thoughts and approbation, seek a thing of small worth, and what is quickly lost. Many are cast at the bar of good men, who stand accepted of God: 2 Cor. x. 18. *For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the*

Lord commendeth. What better was Judas, that the eleven apostles had a better opinion of him, than of themselves, when, hearing Christ's warning of a traitor amongst them, each said, *Lord, is it I?* Believers are never the worse, if other men, worse or better than themselves, pass another judgment on them than God doth.

5thly, The last misrepresentation that the faith of Christ's right representing us to God should support us under, is that that our consciences make of us. This is nearer to us than all the other. The devil and the world are without, and round about us; the law is above us; believers are nearer to us: but conscience is nearest of all. Conscience never condemns a believer, but at the bar of the law, (from which, as condemning, Christ hath redeemed him), and always in and by the working of unbelief. And in a believer, his remaining unbelief acts this way: It looks on the disease, and forgets the physician; it looks on the debt, and forgets the surety, and his payment of it. Conscience saith, "Thou owest many "thousand talents to the law and justice of God: is it not "true, and can it be denied?" "No, must the believer say; "the debt is not to be denied by me: nor Christ's payment "of it to be forgotten by me." The law, as a court of judgment, condemns for sin; but Christ's new court of grace acquits the believer in Christ. To this court every believer appeals, and at it he stands.

So much for the third use of this privilege of Christ's representing us to God, under all the misrepresentations that may be made of believers.

4. Improve this privilege under all dispensations of providence that you may meet with. Are you afflicted by the Lord's hand? and would ye have sound consolation under it? All are sensible of afflictions, and all would fain have comfort under them. Sometimes the Lord sends an extraordinary measure of this comfort unto his people, which is above the usual activity of their faith: but though this be very pleasing and useful, it is not oft of long continuance, nor is it fit it should. But there is a *rejoicing in tribulation,* that is a duty that Christians should make conscience of; as well as there is a *joy of the Lord that is their strength,* Nehem. viii. 10. which they

should seek and value. This rejoicing is only by faith; and this faith, that produceth the joy, is acted on Christ, and on our interest in him. "I am heavily afflicted by the Lord's "hand, saith the believer: but I am a member of Christ's "body; my head is concerned in it, and will support me "under it. He keeps up the peace betwixt a correcting fa-"ther and a corrected child. And as long as the peace stands, "no real hurt can come to me. Are you tempted of the de-"vil?" as indeed the most part of most Christians lives is taken up with affliction and temptation; and the whole armour of God is provided for, and to be used in and under them, Eph. vi. 10,—18. It was an odd remark of a minister of great learning and grace, "I never knew an eminent saint, but he "had either singular afflictions or singular corruptions to wres-"tle with." The apostle tells us, 2 Cor. xii. 2. *I knew a man in Christ, caught up into the third heavens*, doubtless meaning himself. You think it is no strange thing that a man in Christ, one like Paul, should be so dealt with; especially when he saith, Eph. ii. 6. that God *hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* But this is more strange, that this man in Christ, this man new come down from heaven, should immediately after be buffeted by Satan. If you be so dealt with, how is it to be borne? The devil hath many things to say against us; some too true, that we cannot deny; and some things false, which we may justly deny, and yet do not through our weakness. But when Satan chargeth us with sin truly, which we cannot deny, I would not have believers reason and parley with him, (he is too cunning a sophister for us); but only tell him something of Christ, that we too often forget, and that the devil can neither bear nor answer. "If the devil speak against me as a sinner in my-"self, I say Amen to all that is true; but if he say any thing "against Christ the Saviour, I dare say he is a liar." If the tempted believer can but say, "I am in Christ, and therefore "I shall prevail; Christ hath overcome the devil, and there-"fore I will resist him;" the victory is near at hand.

5. Improve this privilege of Christ's representing you to God, in all the service and obedience you perform to God. All men owe all service unto God; all true Christians are in

hearts devoted to his service; and the best Christians mind it most, and perform it best: but when they review their performances, they see them so faulty, and short of what they ought to be, that they see more reason to mourn over the iniquity of their holy things, than to glory in their holy things. Yet notwithstanding all the failings in the sincere obedience of a true believer, (and he alone is the man in whom sincerity is, and by whom any act of sincere obedience can be performed), yet are they *acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*, 1 Peter ii. 5. Their *fruits of righteousness* (though far from being fully ripe and perfect) *are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God*, Phil. i. 11. Far be it from me, to encourage any believer (much less an unbeliever) to put any confidence in their own works or obedience; but I am sure that it would greatly promote a believer's peace and joy, to look rightly on the fruits of his faith. And that is the right way of judging of them by a believer, when he saith concerning his obedience, these four things; "1. I, the worker, am one in Christ. "2. The work I do, is the fruit of my faith in Christ, and "of my being in him. 3. The work is done in Christ's name. "4. And as such is put in his hand, to be perfumed and pre-"sented to God by him." Must not the conclusion of faith be, that Christ will procure a gracious acceptance thereof?

6. Improve this privilege of Christ's representing you unto God, as to your peace with God, and the acceptance of your persons. Build all your desires, expectations, and hopes of acceptance with God, on this alone, even on this representation that Christ makes of you to God. God's favourable acceptance of a sinner never had, nor can have any other foundation: Eph. i. 6. *We are accepted in the beloved.* Rom. v. 1. *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* But how comes this peace, this justification? It is by Christ, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification, Rom. iv. 25. How would the peace of believers flow as a river, if their faith were active this way? "As Christ represents me to God; so do I stand accepted, "surely and eternally."

7. *Lastly*, Improve this privilege by faith, in all the views and prospects you have of your last appearing before God.

Our appearances before God now are many and considerable. We are always in his sight; we oft draw near to him in his ordinances; he sometimes is pleased to admit us into his special gracious presence, and to manifest himself to us: but all these are small things, compared with the last, which is far greater than all that went before it. The native question that starts up in the mind of a man that thinks seriously on his appearance, is this, "How shall I be found of him in peace?" And the only gospel-answer is, "Thou must be found in "Christ," Phil. iii. 9. *Abide in him; that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming*, 1 John ii. 28. None will be *found of him in peace* in that day, *without spot and blameless*, as all should labour for, 2 Pet. iii. 14. but only they that are *found in him*, Phil. iii. 9. and *presented spotless by him*, Jude, ver. 24. I know that the deep and serious thoughts of this awful appearance before God, are sufficient to make a sinner see the vanity of all refuges, save that of Christ's righteousness. How much more will the glory of the last day do it? Proud men, and trusters to their own righteousness will then, find too late, that that covering of their nakedness is too narrow; and that the beauty of their works, which they valued themselves upon here, will be but deformity before that tribunal. If there be but one blot, one hole in that robe that a man appears before God at last in, (and all that is a man's own, is but *rags*, and *filthy ones* too, Isa. lxiv. 6.), the sword of justice will enter in, and destroy that man. But to believers found in Christ, and covered with Christ's righteousness, there is no danger. The righteousness is perfect, and their acceptance in it perfect and eternal; and the crown of righteousness given to them, will be given by him, and received by them *with exceeding joy*, Jude, ver. 24. We read that there is *joy in heaven, and in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth*, Luke xv. 7, 10. How much more joy will there be, when all Christ's children shall be brought home, to his Father's house? when he shall give that account of them, *Behold, I and the children which God hath given me*, Heb. ii. 13.? Did Christ lay down the dear price with joy; and that *for the joy set before him*, Heb. xii. 2.? and

will he not receive his full purchase with exceeding joy? It will be his, and his church's marriage-day, Rev. xix. 7, 8, 9. And never were there such lovers, as Christ and his bride. No such lover in heaven, as he, and no such love on earth, as that the church hath to him. And must not the joy be great, on their everlasting union and communion, at that day! So that we may say, that when a believer kneels to receive the crown of glory from his hand, who bought it for him by his blood shed in love, he cannot say with more joy, "O "how glad am I of this day of my receiving this crown!" than Christ will say, "I am more glad of the day in which "I give it:" *for in all things he must have the pre-eminence*, Col. i. 18. Christians, think justly, and think joyfully, of this great and notable day of the Lord, when he will make the greatest and most public representation of his church unto God, as the glorious head of his glorified body. See what food your faith can gather from that scripture, which, whatever fulfilments it hath had, or may yet have in time, is to be perfectly fulfilled (as many other scriptures) at the last day, Zeph. iii. 17. *The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy: he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.* Who of you hath faith to believe this? Where is the believer who dare apply these words with the confidence of faith to himself? Who is so bold as to say, (and yet all in Christ ought to say so) "The blessed day is "coming, and will surely come, when Jesus Christ will be as "glad to see me in heaven, as I can be to see him, or myself "there? He *will rejoice over me with joy*; that is, he will ex-"ceedingly rejoice: *he will rest in his love*; that is, he will "love for ever, without wearying or change: *he will joy over "me with singing*; that is, his love and joy will break forth "into a song." And indeed the joy of Christ in heaven is the best part of heaven's music. One cloud or frown in Christ's face in heaven, would put an immediate damp on all the holy and happy mirth there. But there is no danger of any interruption: for when the imputed righteousness of Christ is on the glorified in all its glory, (and that is when it appears with all the blessed ends it was wrought out for, and applied for, by Christ); when inherent holiness is perfect in

them, and immediate communion with him is enjoyed in this true paradise of God; neither the tempter, nor temptation, nor sin, nor wrath, can enter. The *pillars in heaven*, as Christ promiseth to make *him that overcometh*, Rev. iii. 12. are more fixed, than those of the old heavens and earth, which he will shake and remove, Heb. xii. 26, 27, 28. Many doubting Christians get safe to heaven, that oft feared that they should never get in; but all that get entrance, are immediately assured, that they shall never be turned out again. As, on the other hand, many flatter themselves with vain hopes of heaven, who, when they find at last, to their dreadful surprise, that heaven's door shuts them out, and hell's door shuts them in, they know, that the latter door will never be opened to let them out, nor heaven's door be opened to let them in. Remember, that you will be lodged in your everlasting habitations, by the sentence of the great Judge in that day; that your sentence will be, as your interest in Christ, and his interest in you is, and appears. Do you believe a day of judgment? Then quickly run in to Christ; abide in him, as your only refuge; and let the last day find you in him; and you are safe now, and shall know and find your safety more in that day.

So much for the first thing, In what cases believers should improve this great privilege of Christ's representing them unto God. A privilege, in which as Christ's glory appears, so the salvation and peace of believers is secured.

Secondly, A little on the second thing proposed, In what manner is this improvement of this privilege to be made?

1. It is to be improved with the deepest humility and self-abasement. We are so prone to pride, that not only are natural men proud of their rotten and filthy rags; but believers are not out of danger of being proud of borrowed raiment. The loathsome, naked infant, that had no eye to pity, no hand to help it, but the Lord's; when its beauty was made perfect through the Lord's comeliness put upon her, did yet trust in her own beauty, Ezek. xvi. 3,—15. I know that there the Prophet, in a figure, points at Israel's low state the Lord found them in; and the high state he had advanced them to, of his mere grace and mercy; and, from both, is aggravating their sin in forgetting both, and the dreadful wickedness that peo-

ple fell into from that forgetting: but, by a just parallel, it may be applied unto particular persons. If you make a question, Is it possible that a man can be proud and vain of Christ's righteousness imputed to him for his acceptance with God? I answer, 1. A man may imagine, that he is in Christ, and accepted with God on Christ's account, and may be proud and puffed up. Of this there is no doubt: for false notions in men may make them proud. If the legal Pharisees *trusted in themselves, that they were righteous, and despised others*, Luke xviii. 9. when they had no ground nor reason for it; why may not a hypocrite make a groundless boast of his faith and interest in Christ, and in his righteousness, and be proud and secure upon that imagination? Much of this was in Laodicea's case, Rev. iii. 17, 18. 2. If a true believer find any vanity rising in his heart, on the account of Christ's righteousness reckoned to him; at that time that person hath the notion of this privilege in his mind and memory, rather than a right sight and sense of it on his heart by faith. For, 3. This great privilege, as it is given by God, that no flesh may glory in his presence; so where it is seen and pondered by faith, it always humbleth the happy partaker of it: for he still remembers what he was without it, before he got it, and what vile nakedness in him is covered by this gifted righteousness. See the latter part of Ezek. xvi. 60, 63.; where the Lord, after all the enumeration and aggravation of Israel's sinfulness, comes in with that God-like, *Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.* "It would be but a short lasting covenant, "if it stood upon thy keeping, or were dissolved by thy break-"ing of it." What is the end of this marvellous grace? *That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame.* A sad-like exercise. But when is it to be done to purpose? When the Lord doth plague and rend Israel? when he sets their sins in order before them, and writes bitter things against them? No; but *when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.* Like the promise in Ezek. xxxvi. 31. "When "my quarrel against thee for thy sin is laid aside by me, it "shall be taken up by thee in judging and condemning thy-

"self; when thy sins are forgotten by my grace, they shall "be remembered by thee for thy self-abasement." The pardoned man only is the true penitent; and that is the best repentance that is exercised in the reading of our sealed forgiveness. Therein a man seeth that dreadful roll blotted out, but only by free grace in the blood of Jesus. No sin is forgiven, but in the virtue of that blood. When therefore a believer seeth the vilest of all things, his sins, and the most sacred of all things, the atoning blood of the Son of God, joined together in his charter of pardon; what thoughts the pardoned man must have of sin, of grace in forgiving, and of the way in which this forgiveness cometh, it were happier for you and me to feel, than it is easy for me to express, or for any to think, but such a happy soul that feels it. We have an instance of a great sinner greatly forgiven, in Luke vii. 39,—50. The Lord send us her blessing, and her frame. A proud pardoned sinner is a monster. Art thou a sinner, and proud of thy sin? Then art thou an open rebel against an offended God. Art thou a sinner, and proud of any thing? Thou art a fool; proud, when the most debasing thing lieth upon thee! But art thou a pardoned sinner, and not humble? What name should such a creature be called by? Canst thou be proud of thy pardon, when thy conscience tells thee truly, that thou deservedst to be damned, as justly as any God ever condemned? and that only free grace made the difference betwixt you and them, in your sentence, when there was no difference betwixt their and your deserts? Canst thou be proud of pardon in Christ's blood, when both the guilt and vileness of sin is so discovered in the only way of its expiation; and when the glory of grace in contriving, using, and applying this expiation, shineth so brightly? Believers, whenever you read your charter of pardon in the new covenant, do but remember who and what is forgiven, and who he is that forgiveth, and on what account he doth forgive; and see if these will not lay thee, and keep thee low in his sight.

2. This great privilege should be improved by believers, with confidence and assurance of faith. Trembling believers may be true believers: but trembling and doubting believing is never due believing; it neither giveth the glory due to God,

nor brings in that peace and fruit that is needful to the believer. Doth Christ represent you to God for acceptance, and do you doubt whether you shall be accepted? Is not this very sinfully to question his interest at the highest court? Say not, you doubt your acceptance, because of your great unworthiness; for there is no worth but Christ's that is regarded in your acceptance. The question is not, "Am I any way "worthy of God's gracious acceptance?" But it is, "Is Christ "worthy, and able to make such an unworthy sinner as I am, "to be accepted? and is his worthiness for this, to be fear-"fully or confidently trusted in by me?" See two passages about this. The one is an exhortation to all believers; the other is in the triumph of faith of one great believer, in the name of all, and for a pattern to all. The first is in Heb. x. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23.; where we find the apostle, upon the solid and common grounds of every believer's faith, Jesus Christ and his office, urging *drawing near* (and to God, as in chap. vii. 19.) *with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.* Having such a door, such a way, such a high-priest, as Christ is, let us draw near, never doubting our welcome. The other place is in Rom. viii. 31,—39. *If God be for us, who can be against us.* An unanswerable question. But how do we know that God is for us? Thus, *He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all,* ver. 32. the *all* he spoke of in ver. 29, 30. But are there not many things justly chargeable on the elect believers? No, saith he, ver. 33, 34. Nothing, by any, can be laid to their charge. Why so? Are they not *by nature children of wrath, even as others,* Eph. ii. 3.? Yes: *But it is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?* He is a bold devil, or man, or conscience, that condemneth whom God justifieth. But how doth God justify? Is he not the Lawgiver, against whom they have sinned? Yes; but yet he justifieth, and justly: *It is Christ that died,* &c. It is Christ's interest in them, his undertaking and performance for them, his representing them unto God, that is the ground of their justification before God, of their acceptance with God, and and of their joy of faith; as Rom. v. 11. *We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.* Believers, look on yourselves as oft, and as nar-

rowly as you can; judge and condemn yourselves as much as you will; but when you look for acceptance with God, mind Christ alone, and give him glory in trusting confidently for acceptance in him.

3. Improve this privilege with diligence and painfulness. It is well worthy of our diligence, and diligence is needful for us. I shall name on this but two things.

1*st*, Use diligence to keep this privilege, of Christ's representing you to God for acceptance, stedfastly and constantly in the eye of your faith. The peace of Christians would not ebb and flow with every tide, as oft it doth, if this duty were more minded. This is what is called, *holding fast the confidence, and rejoicing of the hope, firm unto the end; and, holding the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end*, Heb. iii. 6, 14. This is what is required of all, in Heb. vi. 11. *And we desire, that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end. The shield of faith, as it quencheth all the fiery darts of the devil*, Eph. vi. 16.; so his most fiery darts are flung against it. Such as know not trials of faith, never had the truth of faith. An evil heart of unbelief (and some roots of it are in the best believers) will oft assault true faith. Great watch and ward should be kept by faith, about our precious faith; for faith doth watch itself. Faith prayed in that man, *Lord, help my unbelief*, Mark ix. 24. Hath the Lord once or oftener *caused you to hope?* as Psal. cxix. 49.; hath he taken you, and made you sit down, and rest on the precious foundation, Jesus Christ? Hold you there. *Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel*, Col. i. 23. *But as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith*, Col. ii. 6, 7. If you try this work, you will quickly find that diligence is needful. If you give diligence in it, you will quickly find the rich profit of it.

2*dly*, Use diligence in your improving of this privilege, in studying likeness and conformity to Jesus Christ. Hath he blessed you with this great grace of representing you in his righteousness for your acceptance with God? Should not you study to get Christ's image in true holiness, more and more increased in you? True gospel-holiness is only planted by

1. The glory of Christ as he represents God unto his church, to be savingly known by them; and, 2. His glory as he represents his church unto God, to be graciously accepted of God. There are no saving views of God, but in Christ; and there are no gracious views God hath of men, but in Christ. If we look on God out of Christ, we are dazzled with an overwhelming, confounding majesty; if God look on us out of Christ, he seeth hateful and hated sinners. To both these I have largely spoken, both doctrinally, and with application.

II. I come now to the second thing, *What is the beholding of Christ's glory.* His glory is a divine glory; but the beholding of it is a creature's act. And because his glory is divine, and therefore infinitely great, it is a deeper theme in itself than the beholding of it; yet some way the beholding of his glory, is darker to us than his glory. We are able to know a little more of his glory, than we can know what that beholding of it is that Christ here prays for. But, indeed, both the glory of Christ as manifested in heaven, and the glorified saints beholding of it there, are themes too deep, and too dark, for any man to conceive or express. My way therefore of speaking to this subject, of the beholding of Christ's glory in heaven must be by way of comparison, comparing it with such beholdings of his glory as saints on earth have had, or may have. And of such we find specially these three:

1. Some beheld Christ's glory before he came into the world; before he took to him man's nature: as Abraham did, John viii. 56. *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad.* So in John xii. 41. *These things said Esaias* (in chap. vi.), *when he saw his glory and spake of him.* This was by faith: and the light that that faith was begotten by, and acted in, was that of the divers ways and manners in which God communicated his mind to his people before the law, which, doubtless, carried such credentials with them, that did satisfy the faith of believers at that time, as really as God's written word now doth a New Testament believer's faith. If we think that the Spirit of God, by Moses's pen in Genesis, gives but a small and short account of the patriarch's faith,

and of the grounds and actings of it in them, both before and after the flood; yet he, by Paul in the New Testament, giveth a fuller account of it; as in Heb. xi. of many of them; and of Abraham more largely in Rom. iv. and in Gal. iii. 8. where he tells us, that *the gospel was preached before unto Abraham*, in these words, *In thee shall all nations be blessed.* Ver. 16. *Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.* What an exact and spiritual commentator was Paul on Abraham's gospel, *In thee and thy seed shall all nations be blessed?* repeated again to Isaac his son, Gen. xxvi. 4.; by Isaac given as his blessing to his son Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 4.; which he calls *the blessing of Abraham*, as Paul doth, in Gal. iii. 14. This blessing the Lord giveth to Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 14. How many do read these few words in Genesis, that never would have found out that deep gospel in them that Paul doth? That, 1. This promised seed, of whom Isaac was only a progenitor and a type, was Christ. 2. That this blessing to be got in him and by him, was justification. 3. That this justification implied a prior-condemnation and curse that men were under, and which this blessing only could remove 4. That all the families of the earth, to whom this blessing was designed to extend, were the *Heathen*, verse 8. *Gentiles*, verse 14. 5. That this blessing is only received by faith, ver. 7, 9. 6. That the law, which was 430 years after, could not disannul this promise and covenant of grace, ver. 17. 7. That every believer on Jesus Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, partakes of Abraham's blessing, are *Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise; yea, are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*, ver. 26, 28, 29. How much despised by many would this comment be, on so few, and so dark words, and words that have so fair an appearance of a less evangelic sense than the apostle puts upon them? But strangers to that Spirit that dictated the scriptures, will ever prove poor commentators upon the most spiritual part of the scriptures. By this short hint it doth appear, that the patriarchs before the law did behold the glory of Christ, though not yet come: not to speak of the prophets, *who, all of them*

from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days, as Peter saith, Acts iii. 24.

2. The next beholding of the glory of Christ, was, when he came and lived on the earth, and his people lived with him; when *God was manifested in the flesh*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. John i. 14. *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.* This beholding of his glory was only by faith: for many who saw with their bodily eyes this appearance of the Son of God, in man's flesh, that saw his works, *which none other man did*, John xv. 24. and heard his words, such *as never man spake*, John vii. 46.; yet saw no glory in him, nor in any thing he did, or said, or suffered; but despised and hated him; and all because they believed not, John vi. 36. And on them was fulfilled what the prophet foretold, Isa. liii. 1, 2, 3. Our Lord's humbled state was a great, thick, and dark vail on his glory: yet his glory shone in it, and through it; and faith beheld it, 1 John i. 1, 2. Envy not the happiness of such believers as conversed with Christ when he was on earth: though there was a great blessedness in it, Luke x. 23, 24. and Matth. xiii. 16, 17.; yet Christ giveth the preference to them *that have not seen, and yet have believed*, John xx. 29. 1 Peter i. 8. We may justly think, that never was the eye of faith more tried, than by the mean and low appearance, that so great a person, as God's only begotten Son, and coming with the high character of the Messias, and on so great an errand and work as redeeming his church, made, when he came, and was *made manifest to Israel*. And therefore faith in him then had a special difficulty in its way, which ours hath not, when *we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour*, Heb. ii. 9. And this difficulty of believing increased, as Christ's low state did. He was at his lowest on his cross and in his grave. Unbelief, and contempt of him, grew to a dreadful height in his enemies. Faith in him, in them that had it, and had professed it, was brought into its lowest: Luke xxiv. 21. *But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.* They had once so believed. But what did they now? They were *astonished*, ver.

22.; they could not tell whether they should repent of their faith, or of their unbelief. And thus they spoke to Christ himself, but vailed from them. But blessed Jesus, though *entered into his glory*, (as verse 26.), had the same pity and tenderness he had so oft before expressed, and gently rebukes, teacheth them, and recovers them. When he was on his cross, his enemies saw no glory in him, and his friends little else save matter of sorrow. Yet one, a thief, and a dying man too, seeth his glory, and saith, *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.* It is not, as Christ's enemies, and this man's companion, both in his crime and punishment, said, *If thou be the Christ.* But it is as if he had said, "I know "thee to be the Son of God; and though dying, yet going to "thy kingdom: give me a share in that kingdom thou art "now buying by thy blood." And he was answered; the rarest believer that ever was, the greatest faith that ever was acted, and the most gracious answer that ever was given, ver. 43. Well did Jesus, dying for sinners, know how to receive a sinner into heaven.

3. Christ's glory is beheld, when he is in heaven, and his people are on earth. And this by faith also. In this case, though there be not a vail of infirmity on the glory of our Lord, as there was when he was on earth; yet there is a vast distance betwixt him and us; as great as betwixt heaven and earth, as betwixt the right hand of the Father, where he is in his glory, and our weak eye of faith, who are on earth. Yet this eye, in the light and glass of the gospel, can, and doth *behold with open face the glory of the Lord*, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Of this beholding of Christ's glory, I would speak in two instances.

1*st*, At the first conversion of a sinner, when he is made a believer in Christ. None are truly converted to God, but such as are made believers in Christ; and none are made believers in Christ, but they to whom the glory of Christ is discovered. It is by the power of this discovery that faith is wrought; and in the light of it faith is acted. Some think, that a man is converted, when the secure sinner is awakened by the light and heat of God's law, when a profane person is made sober in his conversation. But if there be no more, he may be still as far, yea, farther from true conversion than before: Matth.

xxi. 31. *Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.* And yet the scribes and Pharisees thought themselves in so much better case for heaven than they, that they would not entertain common converse with ordinary sinners; boasted that they were better than such; yea, turned Christ's grace to his reproach: Luke xv. 2. *They murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.* What were they that said so? Were they not sinners? Yes; but they did not see or own themselves to be such. What should a sinner do, but go to Christ? What can come on a sinner, if Christ receive him not? Yea, what is a Saviour of sinners for, but for receiving sinners, and saving them from their sins, Matth. i. 21.? And yet sinners coming to Christ, and Christ's welcome of them, makes unbelievers murmur, both against Christ and believers. So sure it is, that no man can see any glory in that grace of Christ, that he hath no sight nor sense of his own need of. But when was Paul converted, an eminent Pharisee, the best scholar in Gamaliel's school, Gal. i. 14, 15, 16.? It was when *God revealed his Son in him.* It is very likely, that Paul had heard of Jesus Christ, while a Pharisee; but it is certain, that he hated him, his very name, and all that belonged to him. But when the Lord's time was come to call this chosen vessel by his grace, when he intends to subdue and conquer Paul's rebellious spirit, a revelation of Christ is made to him; and the rebel yields, and is made a loyal subject all his days. Would you know when you were converted? If ever it was, it was when you had the first view of the glory of Christ as a Saviour. When this sight is got, then the sinner employs Christ in his saving office, trusts him in it, and is saved by him.

2dly, Christ's glory is beheld by believers, when Christ is in heaven, and they on earth, in the following manifestations of Christ, and of his glory, to them. Whenever Christ is seen, it is by his manifesting of himself. No torch, nor candle, nor fire, could make one see the sun, if its own shining did not. His people, to whom he hath manifested himself once, need to have it repeated again and again. And this blessing he promiseth, John xiv. 21, 23. It is very suspicious, that that man's state is bad, that never had but one discovery of

Christ's glory. Those manifestations of his glory are various, both in measure, duration, and their seasons. Sometimes, upon special diligence in seeking of the Lord, by faith in prayer. What Christian is there that is not able to witness to this, that the times of his special seeking, have been the times of his special finding? If there was more of Moses's spirit, (though it may be there was somewhat in it that was above, both what is either allowable to ask, or attainable by ordinary believers), in Exod. xxxiii. 18. *I beseech thee shew me thy glory*, it would be better with us. If we were more importunate in begging new and clearer visions of the glory of Christ, and renewed visits from him for that end, he would not deny us. If we did go to himself, with that desire that some came with to one of his disciples, John xii. 21. *Sir, we would see Jesus*; can any think he would be displeased? But, alas! we receive not, because we ask not. Sometimes Christ manifests himself in a special manner to his people, in the furnace of affliction, especially if it be for his sake; yea, in the easiest of those sufferings: 1 Peter iv. 14. *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.*

Sometimes the Lord manifests his glory to his people at their dying. And it is then very desireable. Old Simeon had a gracious promise, *that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.* He chused a sweet season of dying, when the promise was fulfilled, and when he had Christ in his arms, and faith and love in his heart bursting out into a song, Luke ii. 27,—29. The first martyr, Stephen, died happily; he died witnessing for Christ: and Christ witnessed for him, when the martyr said, *Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God,* Acts vii. 55, 56. This was better than Moses's dying, Deut. xxxii. 49, 50. and xxxiv. 1,—5. It was a strange journey and call, *Go up and die*, and only take a view of the land that he must not enter into. He saw the land of Canaan, and that was all: but he saw by faith the true Canaan, and entered into it; and there abideth still; save one errand Moses was sent upon with Elias, to wait on their Master on the mount of transfiguration, Matth. xvii. 3.

These are a few instances of the seasons in which the Lord manifests his glory to his people, and in which they do behold it. But this text and theme I am upon, relates to somewhat far higher and greater, than all the beholdings of his glory that ever any saint on earth received. What it is, I cannot tell you, and I am sure that none can; though many may easily tell more of it than I can. There is both a danger and snare in prying within God's vail. I shall therefore content myself with comparing the beholding of Christ's glory by believers on earth, with this beholding of it that our Lord here prays for to all his people in heaven.

This only I would premise unto this discourse, that such as are wholly unacquainted in their own experience, with the beholding of the glory of Christ, by the eye of faith in the gospel-glass, they will, they can, they must understand nothing that can be said of the beholding of Christ's glory in heaven.

These two beholdings of Christ's glory, the one on earth, and the other in heaven, may be compared, and yet differ in several things; of which take these five:—

1. They differ greatly in the measure of glory manifested by him, and seen by the beholders. Christ's glory is infinite; and no creature, in its most exalted capacity, can take a full view of it all. Therefore, though the glorified beholders of it are eternal beholders thereof, yet they never see it all fully, nor can comprehend it. The beholdings of his glory by us on earth, are according to the small measures of its discovery, and suited unto our small capacity. Our old bottles are not fit for this new wine. Believers know this well by their experience. Sometimes they have more, sometimes less of Christ's glory manifested to them; but always less than what they think they need, and would be at. This is so universal in the spiritual sense and experience of Christians, that these two seem to be established, as from the word of God, so from the common experience of believers. (1.) That they whose views of Christ's glory are constantly the same, without any changes and vicissitudes of light and darkness, day and night: and, (2.) That they who see as much of Christ's glory as they desire to see, such never truly saw any

thing of it at all. Was ever true faith in the same activity? Do not all experienced believers witness by their spiritual sense, that sometimes in the word read or heard, there is as a beam of light, and life, and power, that darts upon a word, that they often before had read and heard without any such enjoyment, and which they may remember and think again upon afterwards, without any power to recal the same mercy to their taste again? So it is in prayer, and in all ordinances wherein we seek communion with him. Some have less, some have more; and some believers, at some times of their life, have such manifestations of Christ's glory in his love, tenderness, and familiarity with them, as they can hardly contain. But the best enjoyment for kind, and largest for measure, is far short of what the smallest vessel in Christ's upper-house is fit to receive, and doth receive. The *seeing of the Lord's power and glory in his sanctuary* on earth, is greatly and justly desired by his people, Psal. lxiii. 2. and is well made their *one thing*, Psal. xxvii. 4. and when they obtain communion with him, they all say as one did, Psal. lxxxiv. 10. *A day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.* He was a great man, and a great saint, that said it. But one hour in the court of heaven, is better than a thousand years in God's lower courts. There are *days of heaven upon the earth*, Deut. xi. 21. Such are clear and bright days; but the days of heaven in heaven, are unspeakably more so. What we now receive, is, as Song ii. 9. *Behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.* But then all walls and windows, all means of communion with him, shall be removed, as useful no more: Rev. xxi. 22. *And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it.* Christ himself speaks of this last day, Matth. xxv. 31. *When the Son of man shall come in his glory,—then shall he sit on the throne of his glory.* Then will his glory appear, and his people shall appear with him in glory, Col. iii. 4.

2. In the next place, The way whereby we behold Christ's glory on earth, and shall behold it in heaven, differ greatly. As they differ in measures, so in the manner and ways of be-

holding: 1 Cor. xiii. 12. *For now we see through a glass darkly*, (or in a riddle), *but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then shall I know, even as I also am known.* There are three ways of knowing of things that God provides for us. Our senses, for sensible things; our understanding, for such things as fall not under our senses; and faith, for such things that are beyond the reach of both sense and reason. When Christ was first on earth, he was the object of mens senses, but few knew him; few could say as 1 John i. 2. And when he returns again, *every eye shall see him*, Rev. i. 7.; but all shall not have a comfortable view of him. Every one shall hear his voice, and rise when called, but to a different sentence, John v. 28, 29. *By that wisdom that God hath put in the inward parts, and by that understanding he hath given to the heart*, Job xxxviii. 36. *For he teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven*, Job xxxv. 11. By this noble power men know clearly and surely many things which are beyond the reach of our outward senses. But beyond both is faith, which is as the eye of the new creature, planted by the Lord: whereby the things of God, that can neither be taken up by our external senses, nor be traced by the eye of our minds, are yet, in the light of God's word revealing them, by faith seen and embraced, 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10. Heb. xi. 1. And this exercise of faith, with its fruits, is the utmost that believers reach or can attain while they are on earth. But this beholding of Christ's glory by them that shall be with him where he is, is unspeakably beyond all.

To begin with the first, our bodily senses, they will be perfect in the resurrection-state, in all *the children of the resurrection* as our Lord calls them, Luke xx. 36. The apostle, in disputing about, and proving, and explaining of this article of the Christian faith, in 1 Cor. xv. 44. calls the body that is raised *a spiritual body: There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.* The raised body is a real body, and not a spirit; it is the real true body of every saint that he lived in, that he served Christ in and by; that very body that he departed from at death, and left to the corruption of the grave, that is raised again in *glory*, in *power*, in *incorruption*, as yet

42, 43.; that same once *vile body that is then changed, that it may be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body*, Phil. iii. 21. As the body is, so are its senses and powers. A natural body hath natural powers; and as it decays, those powers decay also; elegantly described in Eccl. xii. 1,—7. But what a spiritual body is, and what its powers are, we do not, we cannot know. But this we know, that there will be a glorious appearance of Christ in that day, that will fall under, and will be taken up by those spiritual senses of the raised bodies of saints, and will be no small part of their happiness. The bodily eye of John, though it was used to the beholding of Christ and his glory on earth, could not bear a little beam of Christ's heavenly glory, Rev. i. 17. Strange! that John should need that Christ should tell him who he was, ver. 18. But what John, while in his natural body, could not bear, every saint in his spiritual body will not only be able to bear, but will with delight behold more than what was like to have killed that beloved disciple.

Again, for the powers of the mind, they in that day will be perfect, so as that all the glory of Christ that shall be discovered, will be beheld by them perfectly, for the perfecting of their blessedness, 1 Cor. xiii. 11, 12.

But for faith, for as needful and useful as it is now, it will then be laid aside as useless. A believer now takes up a a little of Christ's glory; but how? In the word, as in a glass, 2 Cor. iii. 18. No other glass but the gospel-glass discovers Christ's glory to us now; and it is not faith, but dreaming and doting, to study Christ but in that glass. But when both the glass of the gospel, and the eye of faith, shall be laid aside, (the two most useful and needful blessings to a believer while out of heaven, and useful and needful to bring him to heaven), what shall make up the want of them? Even Christ himself seen in his glory. Even as Christ come in the flesh, rendered all the types and shadows of him in the Old Testament no more needful: so Christ appearing in his glory, will do as to the New Testament dispensation.

3. Let us consider and compare these two beholdings of Christ's glory by believers on earth, and saints in heaven,

with respect to the case of the beholders thereof. How vastly do they differ? There are three things in a believer that all the glorified beholders of Christ's glory in heaven are perfectly freed from, sin, infirmity, and affliction.

1*st*, Sin dwelleth in us, in the best, and always while here. There are no sinless beholders of Christ's glory on earth, and there are no sinful beholders of his glory in heaven; and this makes a great difference between them. The believer, when his day is fairest, when his eye is clearest, when his faith is strongest, there is yet sin in him, a body of death hanging about him. Sin in its being in him, is like a film on the eye of faith, and mars clear seeing.

Brethren, there was never a sinless believer on earth but one, and that was Jesus Christ; and it is as far above us to know how he believed, (save that he did so perfectly), as to tell what it is to see him as he is in heaven. The first Adam, while he stood, was not a sinless believer, but a sinless worker: and when he fell, he and all his posterity became sinners. When God's grace falls on any of them, they are made believers through that grace, and believers on it; yet sin remains in them still. Though its guilt is forgiven, and its filth washed away, and its power subdued; yet its being and indwelling remaineth: and this is a great impediment in the acting of faith. If any believer had that privilege, (which I think none ever had, nor none should desire), to be but a little while in the exercise of faith, without any indwelling sin in him; surely that man would believe wonderfully, and would think that he never believed before. It is true, that all true believers are sanctified, and that all true acts of faith are sanctifying; yet no believer is perfectly sanctified on earth. But it is certain also, that the first acting of faith on Christ, is in the sight and sense of our ruin by the power of sin in our nature; and the after actings of faith are from the same sense of remaining corruption in us. Proper faith is, a sinner's dealing with the Saviour of sinners for salvation from sin. Till we obtain perfect salvation from sin, we must act faith for it, and while we act that faith, sin is mixed with our very believing, so as that we must pray

as he did, Mark ix. 24. *Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.*

2dly, There are infirmities in believers, in all their beholdings of the glory of Christ, while they are on earth. There are infirmities in our bodies that all are sensible of; and such have no small influence on the actings of the soul. There are also infirmities in our souls; darkness and dulness in our intellectual powers. But above all these are the infirmities of the new creature. Although it be created in Christ Jesus, although it be supported by his power, and is maintained and fed by influences from him, as its head and root; yet is it still a weak and infirm thing, and is like a *new-born babe*, 1 Pet. ii. 2. But none of these infirmities are in them that behold Christ's glory above; they have outgrown them all, and are become perfect in Christ Jesus. Whatever other times that word hath been, or shall be fulfilled in, its main fulfilment will be at Christ's appearing: Isa. xxx. 26. *The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days.* If such a dispensation in the course of nature were, that the moon shone by night as bright as the sun by day; and if the sun by day did shine seven-fold brighter than now it doth; where would there be eyes to endure it! Surely, none such as ours be. So is it as to the light of that glorious day. Our best eyes that now we have got and use, would fail us; but the Lord provides eyes suitable to the light he will make to shine.

3dly, Besides our infirmities we labour under, we have manifold afflictions also, which the glorified beholders of Christ's glory are free from. No affliction can have room in heaven, Rev. xxi. 4.: yet *through much tribulation must we enter into the kingdom of God*, Acts xiv. 22. Afflictions are trials of faith; faith is to be acted in and under them; often is faith shaken by them. Sometimes believing is strongest, when the believer is in greatest distress. But though this be a duty laid on all, it is not the attainment of all believers. But still affliction is an evil in itself, though the Lord turns it into good. Now, take all together: sin is in us, infirmities compass us about, affliction is laid on us; must not altogether make a great dif-

ference betwixt us, in our beholding of Christ's glory now, from their beholding of his glory who are fully rid of all these things?

4. Consider and compare the difference betwixt our beholding of Christ's glory on earth, and theirs in heaven, as to the fruits and effects thereof. These fruits are of the same nature and kind, and so are expressed in the word. I shall name but three of them. 1. Conformity. 2. Satisfaction. 3. Expression of that satisfaction.

1*st*, Conformity to Christ is the native fruit of beholding of his glory. As it is beheld, this conformity is wrought in the beholder. The natural eye in seeing takes in the visible objects, species, and shape, by its faculty; the mind in knowing takes into itself the intelligible species of the things known: but above these, faith takes in Christ's glory in the gospel; and, beyond faith, the seeing eye of the glorified takes in Christ's glory as it shines in heaven, and is conformed thereto. Compare 2 Cor. iii. 18. which relates to believers on earth, with 1 John iii. 2. which relates to the glorified in heaven. The object is the same, Christ and his glory; the effect of conformity is the same in kind, but not in degree; because the object is not seen by both in the same light, nor with the same eye. The one seeth him as he is; the other seeth him as he appears in the gospel-glass. On this I would lead you to consider,

(1.) How any likeness and conformity to Christ begins. We all by nature *bear the image of the earthly Adam*, 1 Cor. xv. 49. And this is a vile image, of sin, and flesh, and death; nothing like, but quite unlike and contrary to Christ's image: yet, through rich and free grace, many that have borne this sad and sinful image, are blessed with the image of *the heavenly man, the Lord from heaven.* When and how is this great change made? Then only when Christ is formed in them, Gal. iv. 19. when he is revealed to them, and when they by faith see the glory of Christ as a Saviour. They begin to live, when they first look on him as lifted up as God's only ordinance for saving, John iii. 14, 15. There are two discoveries of Christ made to beginners; one is to all, the other only to some. The general to all believers is that that

is both the cause and the ground of faith in him; and that is such a discovery of Christ's ability and good-will to save, as doth engage their heart to trust him, and him alone, with this great concern of their salvation. The other is such a discovery of Christ's glory as doth produce peace in the believer: for in this he not only seeth Christ's all-sufficiency for saving, so as to trust him with it; but he seeth also, that this trustee is so good and faithful, that this concern must be safe, because it is lodged with him. This is like that faith in 2 Tim. i. 12. *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day.*

(2.) How this conformity to Christ is carried on and advanced. Even as it was begun, Col. ii. 6, 7. *Growth in grace*, is by growing *in the knowledge of Christ*, 2 Pet. iii. 18. Abiding in Christ is the way to have our fruits to abound, John xv. 4, 5. Many true Christians cannot tell when they were first converted, when they first believed; but all Christians can tell when they were most holy; and that is always when Christ manifests himself most clearly to them. As to their first believing, they cannot determine that so well, because they cannot easily remember when Christ first revealed himself to them; he hath done it so oft, and every new manifestation of his glory to them, draws forth a new acting of their faith on him; and it may be such a distinct and strong act, as they think they never before did put forth the like. Something of this made a great believer, and an aged divine, when speaking of the time of his conversion, say, "I cannot tell it, for I have "been more than an hundred times converted:" not that he was ignorant or doubtful, that a true conversion is but once, in God's working it; but that it may have many appearances in our sense and experience. David, after his sad fall, prays, Psalm li. 10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me;* when before this he had God's testimony, that he was *a man according to God's own heart*, Acts xiii. 22. from 1 Sam. xiii. 14. A witness not only to the truth, but to the eminency of his saintship. Christ calls that recovery unto Peter, a new sort of conversion, Luke xxii. 32. which he, in amazing grace, promiseth to him, just before his

shameful fall: and yet he was a true believer before, and blessed by Christ, on his profession and acting of faith, Matth. xvi. 16, 17. Another thing may have some influence on Christians ignorance of the time of their conversion; and that is, they can better remember the alarms they had in their conscience by a law-work, than they can the still and calm voice of the gospel. The one not only makes more noise, but it is more readily felt and remembered by us, than the sacred opening of the heart by Christ's love. But whatever mistakes Christians may labour under, and different thoughts and experience they may have as to the time of his love, and the day of his power; yet all true believers are of one mind as to the seasons of their greatest holiness. There are different measures of it dispensed by the Lord, and attained by his people. None of them have attained as much as they would have; and they that have attained most, think least of their attainments, and press most for perfection. But all can readily and unanimously declare, when it is that their graces are most lively, their corruptions most low and least rampant, when their work is most sweet, and Christ's yoke and burden most easy and light; even when Christ is nearest to them, and they to him, and when most of his glory appears unto them: and this not from the might of their faith, as it is their act, (though in such seasons it is in best case), but from the virtue and power of Christ's grace that falls on them, when he is pleased to manifest himself to them. This blessed experience of special likeness to Christ, by his special manifesting of himself to them, is not without some danger, that many saints have fallen into; for when things are so well with them, that the savour of Christ's knowledge perfumes their hearts, and that their secret corruptions shrinks into a corner, (as Christ's glory and our corruptions are contraries), the believer is ready to say, as David did, Psalm xxx. 6. *I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved;* yet quickly was he moved: and so will all be that say as he did; for the stronger that carnal and self-confidence is, the nearer is the man to a shameful fall, as Peter.

(3.) In the last place, Consider how this conformity and likeness is perfected; and that is, as it was begun and advanced, even by the discovery of Christ's glory in heaven:

1 John iii. 1, 2. *We are the sons of God; but the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.* The world knows God's children well enough to despise, hate, and persecute them; and so did the world know Christ; but this sort of knowledge is nothing but ignorance, both of Christ and of Christians. *And it doth not yet appear what we shall be.* But it will at length appear; when and how? *But we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* Yet all these things are food only for humble faith; every thing in it is deep and unsearchable. What is his appearing? What it is to be like him? What it is so see him, and that as he is? and, How this sight of him will make us like him! are unanswerable questions even to an apostle, and to all out of heaven. If it be a dark unintelligible riddle to every natural man, (whatever knowledge he may have of the letter of the word), how a sight of Christ by faith doth begin, and carry on a real begun likeness to Christ in believers on earth; it must much more be dark to them, yea to believers themselves, how the sight of Christ's glory in heaven doth perfect and complete this likeness! We must long for it, and believe it, and leave it to the day that will declare it.

2dly, On this conformity to Christ, followeth satisfaction and blessedness. Of which David speaks, Psal. xvii. 15. *But as for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.* According to the measure of the manifestation of Christ's glory to his people, so is the degree of their likeness to him; and as this likeness to him is, so is the satisfaction and bliss of them that have it. All is begun on earth with the heirs, all is perfect in heaven in the partakers and possessors of glory. A little of both, in comparing them together. Believers on earth, that see his glory, are transformed into the same image, 2 Cor. iii. 18. This conformity always works satisfaction. David speaks of it in Psal. iv. 6, 7. *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.* And indeed they know not the light of God's countenance, that feel not a joy in their heart that all the world can neither give nor take away. Christ promiseth us this joy, John xvi. 22. *I will see you again,*

and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. Paul prays highly for this blessing, Rom. xv. 13. *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.* Peter speaks of joy, as an attainment of believers on earth: 1 Pet. i. 8. *Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.* The joy is unspeakable that is felt by believers, when they do (as sometimes, by his light, they do) see some begun likeness to that lovely image of Christ, that won their heart the first time they saw it, and when it darted its beams of life and love upon their dying souls, and did leave that scent of heaven in their heart, that they cannot rest, till they *apprehend that for which they were apprehended of Christ Jesus*, Phil. iii. 12. In the day that Christ apprehended them, and said to them in love, "Stop, sinners, in your race to hell: follow "me, and I will give you eternal life;" then do they in faith answer, "Behold we come unto thee, and cannot leave thee; "for thou hast the words of eternal life." And thus is fulfilled that blessed saying of our Lord, John iv. 14. *Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.* The original spring is heaven and eternal life; and this given well will spring up as high as its original. Can there be any satisfaction comparable to this, to behold, by faith, eternal life, descending from heaven unto us, in Christ's love and grace; and to find at the same time this same faith climbing up to the possession of this life? This happiness is great enough to disgrace and disparage the poor portion of the worldling, that not only perisheth with the using; but he that hath it, must perish, because he hath no better things, nor things that accompany salvation. But yet, though the believer, in and by his fellowship with the Father and the Son, by the Spirit, hath a joy that the stranger cannot intermeddle with; yet his joy, when most full, is greatly short of theirs in heaven. Only where perfect seeing is, perfect likeness is; and where perfect likeness is, there perfect satisfaction is.

3*dly*, This satisfaction and blessedness is expressed by the

children in love. It should always be so, but is not, Heb. xii. 10. He tells us what is too common, that earthly parents *chasten their children after their own pleasure*, or to vent their displeasure. Parents cannot distinguish betwixt the child and the fault, as they ought.

2. We have a greater instance in Abraham's dealing with Isaac at God's command, Gen. xxii. Isaac was innocent, Abraham loved him; yet the Lord commands him to offer him for a burnt-offering. Now, the Lord did not command, nor allow Abraham to abate ought of that love to his son, that both nature and grace had planted in his heart towards Isaac; and no doubt that love continued in Abraham's heart in all his journey to the appointed place, and in all the preparation he made for the offering the commanded sacrifice: only Abraham was a strong believer, and therefore was all obedience. His love to Isaac did not turn to hatred, when he *stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son*, ver. 10. But only his love to Isaac shrunk up as it were to nothing, through the strength of his faith, and his readiness to obey the will of his God. Isaac's question to his father was an addition to Abraham's trial, ver. 7. And Abraham's answer to it was a great act of his faith in his trial, ver. 8. Isaac said, *Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?* The instruments for the burnt-offering were ready and seen: the wood was on Isaac's back, and the fire and the knife were in Abraham's hand, ver. 6. but no sacrifice was visible. Abraham answers, *My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering*, ver. 8. Little did Isaac think that himself was the commanded sacrifice, and to be sacrificed by his own father's own hands; though, without doubt, Abraham did afterwards tell Isaac the command of God, when he *built an altar on the place God had told him of, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood*, ver. 9. And as little did Abraham think of any other sacrifice, but that of his son Isaac. But by Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19. Abraham's faith did act on divine power, that could raise Isaac to life again, when Abraham had shed his blood, and the wood and fire had burnt his body; being persuaded, that as no command of God was

light of eternity demonstrates it. So that the saint entering into heaven knows, that the everlasting doors that were opened to let him in, are shut on him to keep him in that state to eternity; and this is a great part of his blessedness. And the damned that go down into the pit, do know, that the bars of hell are locked upon them, that they can never get out; and this adds to their begun, but never-ending misery. It is indeed an amazing both fruit and proof of the power of unbelief in men, that though they pretend they know this, yet most men do not in earnest think where, and in what place and condition, they shall be for eternity; and yet bestow many careful thoughts about the condition wherein they may spend their short time on earth.

So much for the doctrinal part about the beholding of Christ's glory in heaven.

Application. 1. Learn from this to behold and understand Christ's last design on his people. It is to have them to behold his glory. Christ will never leave any whom the Father hath given him, till he hath brought them to this. Let believers learn to give Christ his will and his way; give him trust, and give him time, and wait patiently. Art thou given to him? art thou a believer on him? Behold with faith what his design upon thee is. It is to bring thee into that place where he is, that thou mayest behold his glory. Many strange and deep ways and methods doth he use to carry it on. Submit to these, and believe the end of the Lord.

2. Is this Christ's design, to have his people with him where he is, that they may behold his glory? Then see that it be your design too. Many desire to be in heaven, that have nothing of this end in their desires. If your end in desiring to be in heaven, be not the same with Christ's end in desiring it for you, how can you think that your desire is right, or will be accomplished? Some men desire to be in heaven for ever, because they cannot stay always on earth: but if they might live in health and ease, if it were a thousand years on earth, they would never make a hearty prayer for heaven. But these are earth-worms, and God will destroy them. Others desire to be in heaven, only because they think hell is bad quarters,

and that they would be kept from. In effect, all carnal mens desires for heaven, amount to no more but this, "Lord, "save me from hell." They think, that heaven is better than hell, but not so good as the earth, if they might stay comfortably in it. They know, that they must be eternally in heaven or hell; and that the states are so different, that it is easy to chuse which is best for them. But how can a natural, unrenewed man desire heaven? A heaven of his own imagination he may desire: but true heaven, heaven described in the gospel, a state of bliss in the beholding of the glory of Christ, this no unbeliever can have any relish of, or desire after. He can never say a hearty Amen to Christ's prayer in my text; they know not Christ's presence; they never saw any thing of his glory, as it surpasseth all glory. Never will a man desire to make a voyage through death, to see that in heaven, that he never had any relish of, nor savour of, on earth; yea, it is impossible he should.

3. *Lastly*, Let us from hence learn to praise *the dead that die in the Lord*, Rev. xiv. 13. I allude to the word in Eccl. iv. 2. *Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive.* Christ will have them where he is, that they may behold his glory; and when he calls and takes them, they do behold it. This is their happiness; and we should bless them, and rejoice in their bliss. We have an affecting passage in Acts xx. 37, 38. after a farewel-sermon and prayer of Paul's: (Here we have an apostolic pattern for farewel sermons and prayers; but no where have we any for funeral ones): *They all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more*, ver. 25. You may justly think, that as the elders, and others of the church of Ephesus, were excellent persons, and were full of love and value for such an eminent apostle as Paul was; so their grief was great at this sad parting. You in this city have frequently the cause of the like sorrow, if ye had the same spirit as they had. Not that I mean to compare any ministers you have, or have lost, with this apostle: for as I am persuaded we have none like him; so am I, that if there was any liker him than any of us are, considering the spirit of the day we live in, that

minister would be the most despised and reproached of any; though, I hope, some would be found to discern his true worth. If, upon such occasions of the loss of faithful ministers, or useful Christians, you are sorrowing, and saying, "I "shall see his face no more, and hear his voice no more, and "see his tender walking no more;" call this also to mind, "if I shall see his face no more, he seeth Christ's face for "ever; which is better for him than the other would be to "me." There is not a believer in heaven, but he knows this text better than all divines on earth can. Whenever a believer is entered within the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem, this blessed beholding of Christ's glory is better known to him, than angels or men can teach him now. This is indeed *the white stone, and in it the new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it*, Rev. ii. 17. I would only add, that it would be sweet speaking, and sweet hearing of heaven, if we at the same time felt something of it: and though we cannot yet get up into it; yet if, through his grace, something of heaven did come down to us; if the joy of our Lord did enter into our hearts, as an earnest of our entering into it, Matth. xxv. 21, 23.; for in that day it will be too big to enter into them. All our work now is to be well acquaint with Christ as the way. Christ is both the way and the home. We must walk in him, and be travelling towards him: and he is our guide and leader in the way. The work and life of grace is in living on him by faith, and the happiness of heaven is in living with him for ever. O come and see, go and see. He will call you up in due time. Blessed is that believer who is as willing to be in heaven, as Christ is to have him there.

SERMON XVI.

JOHN xvii. 24.

Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

THE last clause of this verse only now remains to be spoken to. And it is, as you have heard, the *fourth* and *last* thing I took up in the matter of Christ's prayer here. The argument which Christ useth to back his desire of having his people with him: it is in these words, *For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.* This I would briefly speak to, and at this time conclude this text. And this argument of Christ I would speak unto two ways:

I. Unto the words in themselves; and,
II. As they are used by our Lord, relating to his prayer.

I. As these words are in themselves. They contain Christ's asserting of the eternal love of the Father unto the Son. For this word, *before the foundation of the world*, and another, *before the world was, and before the world began*, are all to the same purpose, and are the Holy Ghost's expressing of eternity prior to time: for before the world began, there was nothing but eternity; and God *inhabiting* it, as the prophet speaks, Isa. lvii. 15. Of this eternal love of the Father to the Son, I would speak briefly.

1. Consider this eternal love in the Father to the person of his Son. This, I own, is too deep for us to fathom; but it is a blessed deep to swim in. The manner of the everlasting begetting of the person of the Son by the Father, is unsearchable by all creatures, and, it may be, will be so eternally. The state of glory was not designed for satisfying curiosity, and instructing men in points of mere speculation, or in things beyond all created reach. So it passeth our understanding to know how the Father loveth his only begotten

able, 1 Cor. x. 13.; much more was it so in his dealing with Christ, Psal. lxxx. 17. and lxxxix. 19. He knew (what we cannot conceive) what a vast load of wrath this strong one could bear. None but Christ could stand before an angry God, could bear his wrath, and satisfy justice. If I may use such a similitude, when the sword of justice was drawn against Christ, and pierced through his soul and body, the Father knew well that his Son was so armed, that he could not be hurt thereby. His divine nature, and his Father's presence with him, John xvi. 32. and the ineffable union betwixt the Father and the Son, were as armour of proof about the man Christ; that though justice slew him, it did him neither any wrong, nor real hurt, whatever smart was in the stroke.

5. The Father knew the glorious victory that his Son would obtain in, and by, and over all his sufferings; that *for the suffering of death, he should be crowned with glory and honour*, Heb. ii. 9.; that he should *be highly exalted*, Phil. ii. 9. So that what Christ was put to, was but like a father's sending his son to a stormy sea, and a dangerous voyage, from which he knew he should return safe and rich; or like a king's sending his son to war, wherein he was sure he should conquer, and return in triumph. Divine prescience is another thing in God's eye, than angel or man can possibly think. And this was eminently in Christ's sufferings, Acts ii. 23. and iv. 28.

6. There were great and glorious ends God had before him, in all the sufferings that Christ was put to endure; great glory to his grace, great glory to his Son, and a great salvation to his people; of which the word is full. And all that read, or hear, or think of Christ's death and sufferings, without regard to the ends thereof, they mind only a bare history and matter of fact, without any fruit thereby.

7. *Lastly*, The Father loved the Son in dying and for dying, as in John x. 17, 18. For Christ in dying offered up the highest and most acceptable worship and service to God that ever was offered: Eph. v. 2. *Christ loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.* And it is the sweet smell of this sacrifice that drowns, as it were, the stink of all the sins and sinners it was offered for. His death could not be a propitiation, if

it were not so. The two greatest sins that ever were, were, the first Adam's first sinning. All mens sins since, and Adam's own sinning after, (as doubtless he did for nine hundred and thirty years), were all the sinning of sinners: but his first sin was a sinless man's sinning; besides, it was the most damning sin that ever was, or can be. The other great sin, was the crucifying the second Adam, the Prince of life, and the Lord of glory. It is not only charitably believed by the church of God in all ages, that Adam obtained mercy; but hath been proved by some hints in the word, that both Adam and Eve were believers. But for the other great sin, the murdering of the Son of God, it is past doubt, that many guilty of his blood were forgiven in the virtue of it. A singular case were they in. The cry of Christ's blood disturbed and defiled their consciences, (and most justly); and the voice of this blood sprinkling their consciences, purged and pacified them. Now, if to these great sins you add all the sins of all the sinners that were ever forgiven, (and no man can count them, or weigh them), conclude, that there was somewhat offered to God, more pleasing to him than all sin was displeasing; and this was only the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Abraham's offering up of his son at God's command, was highly pleasing to God; but it was but a type and shadow of *Christ's offering up of himself without spot unto God*, Heb. ix. 14. Abraham in that action on the mount was to be a priest, and his son the sacrifice; but he only did offer to be so, and the Lord did accept the will for the deed. But when Christ came to offer himself, for all the perfect will he had to do it, the sacrifice must be offered, and was; and therein was performed the greatest, highest, and most acceptable worship to God. None was ever like it before; and none comparable to it, will, or can ever be. The praises of the glorified in heaven will be high and acceptable worship; but no way to be compared with that worship Christ paid, and God accepted in Christ's death.

And thus much to these words in themselves, as they assert the eternal love of the Father to the Son.

II. I would now speak to them, *with respect to Christ's scope in using them;* and therein would observe three things.

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ was now near to his lowest: and he comforts himself with the faith of his Father's eternal love. So must Christians do. Whatever the Lord brings you to, if it were to the brink of death, you must study to imitate Jesus Christ, and take in the comfort of his everlasting love. For though the love the Father hath to the Son, and that love he hath to believers, do differ vastly; yet they agree in this, that they are both eternal; and in this also, that the faith of this love is supporting to his people, as it was to Christ himself. It is no wonder that believers have so little comfort; even because they do not by faith seek out and dig up the right springs and wells of consolation, and are so little exercised in drawing and drinking out of them. I say not, that this spring of consolation, eternal love, is the first, and plainest, and easiest to come at; but only that it is the strongest, when a believer can find it out, and use it.

2. Consider this word of Christ, as it is an argument backing his prayer, and every petition in it. He calls God *Father;* and rightly, *because thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.* "Glorify thy Son, *for thou lovedst me.* I pray for thine and mine, *for thou lovedst me.*" How boldly may a believer pray, when he hath this argument in the hand of his faith to pray upon: "Lord, hear me; for thou hast loved me in thy "Son before the foundation of the world?"

3. The main thing in the scope of these words of Christ is this, that the Father's love to Christ is the fountain of all good to his people. Christ is praying in this verse for the greatest good to his people, even for heaven; and this suit he urgeth on this argument, *For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.* You would think, that the argument would have run more plainly, (but it would not have run so sweetly, and so strongly), if it had been thus: "I will that "they may be with me where I am; that they may behold "my glory: for thou hast loved them, and I have loved them, "before the foundation of the world." But it is best as Christ useth it, *For thou hast loved me.*

On this truth, That the Father's love to Christ is the fountain of all good to his people, I would give a few instances of it, and conclude this text with a few words of Application.

Instances are, 1. Election, that sovereign *purpose and grace* of God, *is given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began,* 2 Tim. i. 9. *We are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world,* Eph. i. 4. Christ did not purchase the grace of election for us; yet there is no election but in Christ, and unto *the sprinkling of his blood,* 1 Peter i. 2. The end, salvation; the way and means reaching to this end, faith and sanctification, are joined in this purpose, 2 Thess. ii. 13. and Christ's interest in it, 1 Thess. v. 9. *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,* and this salvation in Jesus Christ, with eternal glory, is obtained by the elect, 2 Tim. ii. 10.

2. The grace of redemption comes to us from the Father's love to his Son. This love sent him to be Redeemer, and accepted the price of his life for his flock. Abstracting from his eternal counsel and covenant, God was at liberty to have left man in the pit he had thrown himself in, and to appoint no Redeemer. But, not to trouble our heads with such unprofitable speculations, it is plain, that the whole business of redemption by Christ was transacted before time, promised in time, and dispatched in the fulness of time, in love to Christ the Redeemer, as well as in love to the redeemed.

3. Christ's intercession in heaven. Whence is it so prevalent, but from that great favour Christ stands in heaven in? It is from the love the Father hath to the Son, that Christ's desires for his people are so successful. It is upon this love that Christ prays for heaven to his people in this text. And this whole prayer in this chapter, was a mediatory prayer of Christ when on earth, and the best copy we have of his intercession in heaven.

More particularly, 1. The quickening of a sinner dead in sins and trespasses, is from the Father's love to his Son. All the dispensations of converting grace on sinners, are acts and fruits of the Father's love to Christ: John vi. 44, 45. *No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.* "And when he is drawn, and cometh, I will "welcome him, and give a good account of him one day." And *I will raise him up at the last day.* But how doth the Father draw men to Christ? By his way of teaching. *It is*

written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Till Christ's Father, by his Spirit, teach a sinner, and tell him good news of Christ the Saviour, he will not, he cannot come to Christ by faith: for divine teaching doth at the same time reveal Christ as the object of faith, and work the grace of faith, and draw forth the act of faith. We are oft complaining, (and not without cause, if we had a right frame of heart in it), that many sinners continue dead under the report of Christ in the gospel; and that conversion and quickening of the dead is rarely heard of, and seen. What is the cause of this rareness? It is not that sinners are without man's teaching, but because Christ's Father doth not teach them; and till he do, they will never miss, nor value, nor seek divine teaching. They seek but the shell of the gospel, they seek but the field where the treasure is hid, Matth. xiii. 44.; and that they think any minister can shew them. But the finding the hid treasure in it, no apostle was ever able to teach a man to do. All they can say is, that this enriching treasure is in the field of the gospel, and no where else; but it is hid in it; and till there come light from heaven, you will never find it, but die as poor as your father Adam left you, and in worse case than if you had never heard of this field. But what should we do in this sad condition? Wait on the Lord, who hath the times and seasons in his own hand; and while you wait, pray and cry for his teaching, and make use of this argument of the Father's eternal love to the Son. Say, "As thou lovest thy Son, teach me, and many perish-"ing sinners like me, to know thy Son."

2. The justification and acceptance of a sinner with God, comes only from the Father's love to his Son. *We are accepted in that beloved*, Eph. i. 6. and *are translated into the kingdom of the Son of his love*, Col. i. 13. All the love believers partake of from God, is but a drop, a sprinkling of that love he hath to Jesus Christ. Therefore saith our Lord in this prayer, ver. 23. *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me;* and ver. 26. *And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the*

love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them. No love, no grace, no favour comes from the Father immediately, but all in and by Jesus Christ the Mediator. Without a Mediator the Father dealeth not with us when he doth us good; and without a Mediator we must not deal with God, if we would please him.

3. Believers are preserved in Jesus Christ in this accepted state, Jude, ver. 1. Every one that is raised up by Christ, is preserved as safely in a state of grace, as Christ is in the state of glory. *Because I live, ye shall live also,* John xiv. 19. and x. 27, 28, 29. The weakest lamb in Christ's flock, that hath heard the great and the good Shepherd's voice, and follows him, though feebly, and with many fears, shall have eternal life; and he shall be kept by the power of God through faith, till he possess it, 1 Pet. i. 5. Christ's arm, and his Father's arm, are more than we can conceive; and yet no less than is needful, to secure the weakest, against the greatest dangers.

4. *Lastly,* The bliss of glory in heaven is the joy of our Lord, Matth. xxv. 21, 23. All the eternal embracements of divine love they get there, are on the account of the Father's love to the Son. It will mainly be fulfilled then, what Christ promised, John xiv. 20. *At that day, ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.*

Application. 1. How should this endear Christ to us, the Father's love to us in him, and all the fruits of this marvellous love? How precious to us should all be? Should not all say, as one did, Psal. xxxvi. 7. *How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God.* Did ever a man see it by faith, did ever one taste that the Lord is gracious, did ever any hope for it, that did not count it *marvellous loving kindness,* as it is called, Psal. xvii. 7. and xxxi. 21.? The love of such a God as he is, unto such vile creatures as we be; and this love flowing to us in such a channel as this, God's love to his own Son, and streaming forth in all the blessings of grace and glory, is a love that all that know it wonder at, and that all that taste of it know best, and wonder most at. Enjoyments of this love, and admiring at it, are inseparable, both on earth, in believers; and in heaven, in beholders. You have not come under the warm

beams of this love, that do not stand astonished at its nature and greatness, and who do not find something both of the depth and blessedness of that word, 1 John iv. 16. *We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* Try to say this particularly of yourselves, and you will find its difficulty. If you attain to it by the Spirit of faith, you will find its blessedness. Yea, what are all the blessed beholders and enjoyers of this love in heaven, but a blessed company of wonderers at this love? They are in the midst of the ocean of of this love, (whereof a few drops tasted by them on earth, made a begun heaven to them), blessedly swimming, diving, drinking, and admiring. But it is but very little of what they get there, and of what they do there, that we do or can know while we are here. Yet, believers, do you receive any spiritual blessing? Is it not a lovely spring it flows from, the Father's love to his Son, Eph. i. 3.? Is it not a sweet name that thou shouldst by faith give to thy pardon, to thy sanctification, to the Spirit of prayer, and to any fellowship with God: "This, and that, and all and every good I obtain, is all from "the love of God in Jesus Christ my Lord," Rom. viii. 39.? This way of conveyance proclaims, that all is of free grace, and this way makes the blessing sure and sweet. Thankfulness for his unspeakable gift would rise higher, and be purer, and more constant, if we could read the name of the Father's love to his Son written (as surely it always is, though not always read) on all our mercies. This would make a crumb from the Master's table be earnestly begged, when we are hungry; and would make us, when we get it, prize it more than the greatest revenues of the wicked. This love of God in Christ is an ingredient in mercy, that makes the mercy swell up to heaven. It is an ingredient in the bitterest cup of affliction, that not only prevents any poison apprehended to be in it (and what is more usual to our unbelief than to call God's physic poison?), and promotes our health thereby; but it doth also cool the fiery furnace, and sweeten it, and make it the place of love and praise; as it was to the three children, in Dan. iii. 25.

2. Learn, Christians, to use this argument in Christ's pray-

er, in your prayers also. You see our Lord prays for his people on this argument, *For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.* Let your faith chime to this prayer, and say, "Father, I would be with Christ where he is, that I may behold "his glory which thou hast given him: for thou lovedst him "before the foundation of the world." You daily hear, that you should pray to the Father in Christ's name. Now, what is it, but to raise our faith, and to embolden our confidence with God, merely on the account of that high love the Father bears to the Son? Blessed is the believer that can plead with God on the argument of the Father's love to his Son, That though we have nothing in us that is lovely in God's sight; though we can do nothing to make ourselves acceptable, or our desires successful; yea, though there be a cloud upon God's love to us: yet we build all our hopes of acceptance and success, and these hopes strong and high, on this lovely and beloved one, Jesus Christ, and on the Father's love to him. Whatever you want of God, you may ask, and ask it on the same grounds Christ prays for you upon. You will say, May every one ask on this argument? I answer, Every believer may, and ought; and if he be wise, he will; and if he doth plead thus, he will prevail. But how may I know that I am a believer on Jesus Christ? The Spirit of Christ sometimes suddenly satisfies the doubting soul; and that is a great mercy. He shines on the promise, and makes it bright; shines on faith, and makes it strong and active; and manifests Christ's glory so as that the heart cannot forbear to believe, and love, and know that it doth so. But the common way, and the way of our duty, is, to satisfy our hearts as to our being true believers on Christ, by repeating the actings of faith on him. I say not, Believe that you do believe; but I say, Believe on Jesus Christ, and you shall know that you are believers on him; as in 1 John v. 13. *These things have I written to you that believe on the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. Faith is the evidence of things not seen,* Heb. xi. 1.; and the Spirit of faith in believers giveth evidence to faith itself. By this Spirit we *know the things that are freely given us of God,* 1 Cor. ii. 12.; and faith is a special gift of God. That word in 1 John

v. 10. is of great extent, *He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself.* I dare be bold to say, that there are few true believers, who are in the lively exercise of faith in Christ, and while in that exercise, but they are some way persuaded, that they are believers: in so far, that if Satan should say to the contrary, yea, or if the Lord himself should seem to say to the contrary; yet they cannot deny that they are believers on Christ. How can this be? say you. I answer, It is from the sense and inward feeling of the workings of their hearts, in dependence and trust on Jesus Christ for salvation. Is it not thus with you, Christians, whenever you are thoughtful about salvation; whenever you are terrified by the law; whenever Satan assaults you by the remembrance of your sins and ill-deservings: yea, whenever *God writes bitter things against you, and maketh you to possess the iniquities of your youth*, or riper age, Job xiii. 26.? What do ye do? Whither do ye go? Is it not always to Jesus Christ by faith? Every true believer can readily answer these three questions, which no unbeliever can, Isa. x. 3. *What will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?* Every believer can answer, "Come what desolation will, I know "what to do, I know whither to go for help, and where to "leave my glory; even on Jesus Christ by faith." You have no other answer to give to the law of God condemning you, to the devil accusing you, nor to your own conscience challenging you, but only this: "Jesus Christ came into the "world to save sinners; his Father, in love to him and sin-"ners, sent him; he came and died in love to sinners: and "I, on the good report of him in the gospel, do daily come "to him to be saved by him, and do look for salvation in him, "and by him, and from him; and all my sins, and unwor-"thiness, and fears, and the sad grounds of these fears, are "all but so many cords to draw me more and more to Christ "by faith, and to bind me faster to him. And if I am a "believer on him, I am one of those he prayed for in this "chapter, and in this verse, *Father, I will that they also whom "thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may "behold the glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me*

"*before the foundation of the world.* If Christ prayed so for "me, I may surely pray so for myself: for a better copy I "cannot follow. If Christ prayed so for me, he was surely "answered, and the blessing will be given; and I may firmly "believe, and patiently wait for the salvation of God. And "I may also use the same argument for strengthening of my "faith, that Christ used to enforce his suit; even the eternal "love of the Father to his Son."

This is indeed a great and marvellous salvation which God hath provided for his people. Marvellous in the way, Jesus Christ; and that the gospel doth now declare. Marvellous in the beginning and progress of this salvation. A sinner must feel grace before he *know the grace of God in truth*, Col. i. 6. He must have faith wrought in him, and acted by him, before he know what believing to the saving of the soul is, Heb. x. 39. He must be in heaven, before he know well what heaven is: yea, which is more strange, the believer must be in heaven, before he know perfectly the way to heaven. We know that Christ is the way; that we must enter into him by faith, as he is the way; that we must walk in him, and abide in him, and live on him, till we come home to his Father's house. But how Christ became the way to heaven; how he is the new and living way: how he consecrated himself as the way; how he was the beloved of the Father, and bruised with divine wrath at the same time; how Christ the living head draws dead lumps of hell, and makes them lively members of his own body; how he knits and nourisheth them by spiritual joints and bands, Col. ii. 19. till he perfect them in himself, Eph. iv. 19. and Col. i. 28.; how he gives the last pull and drawing at death, and receiveth them unto himself, John xiv. 2, 3.; what Christ is now doing in preparing a place for them; and what he will at last do, in receiving them, and presenting them to his Father: these, and many such things, are matter for our daily exercise in faith, and hope, and wonder. Our main work while we are here, and without the vail, is, to be striving to get more and more into Christ by faith; and not only to get within the gates and walls of this city of refuge, (and *the walls are salvation, and the gates praise*, Isa. lx. 18.), but also to get

into his palaces, where he giveth his loves. *His love is better than wine*, Song i. 2. The taste of this love would quickly make all the wells of this world's consolations to be as tasteless and empty to us as they are in themselves. Unspeakably both strong and sweet is that mortification and deadness to the world, that is wrought in the believer, by *the shedding abroad of the love of God in his heart by the Holy Ghost*, Rom. v. 5. You live in an evil world. It will mock you, and hate you; but do you pity it. A believer is a pitiful creature in the eyes of the ungodly; *looking at things that are not seen, and not looking at things that are seen*, 2 Cor. iv. 18.; despising this world and all things in it as a portion, and seeking an unseen and future glory in an unknown world to come. To build all our hopes of partaking and possessing of it on an unseen Christ; to bottom our faith on him, upon a word from him; to live and die upon his promise, and to do both cheerfully, are the glory of a Christian. But this glory is turned into shame by the thoughts and reproaches of all unbelievers. *But let the righteous hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands, shall wax stronger and stronger*, Job xvii. 9. *Your path is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day*, Prov. iv. 18. Pass through this world, believers in Jesus, liking nothing in it, caring for nothing in it, content and satisfied with nothing it can give, moved with nothing in it; neither much taken up with the much evil, or the little good of it; neither cast down with the frowns, nor lifted up with the smiles of this vain deceitful world. Pass on, and *press forward for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*, Phil. iii. 14. You have greater things to look to, greater things to fix your hearts and hopes upon, than all this world: even to that blessed state, when we shall be with Christ where he is, and shall behold his glory which his Father hath given him: for the Father loved his Son and our Saviour before the foundation of the world.

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

G. Caw, Printer.